



NEW YEAR NEW MAN

THE 5-STEP PLAN TO
RUNNING SUCCESS *P38*



**"WHY I'M
RUNNING
A MARATHON
IN SPACE"**
Astronaut Tim Peake

Running with
the missus:
5 top tips *P32*

3 moves to
a magical
marathon *P42*

Set yourself
a big trail
challenge *P94*

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100 RACES YOU
HAVE TO TRY!

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EDITOR'S LETTER

READY, SET, RUN

Running a marathon, losing a few pounds, setting a new PB: whatever your running target, the New Year is the perfect time to start making a dream a reality. Personally, I'm signing up for one of those swim-run adventures to find out just how difficult it is to run in a wetsuit. Prediction: very.

This issue is full of motivational advice to help you achieve something great in 2016. There are few runners more inspiring than Steve Way, who transformed himself from an overweight, 20-a-day smoker to an Olympic marathoner. On page 19, he offers his advice to anyone starting on their own running journey.

For many people, the marathon signifies the ultimate running challenge. With the spring marathon season just around the corner, you'll love Martin Yelling's must-read marathon guide on page 42.

Those looking for a more leftfield challenge should set their sites off-road, where a world of muddy adventure awaits. On page 94, trail guru Ceri Rees takes a look at five off-road challenges worth considering.

If the thought of signing up to a challenge alone doesn't appeal, consider the merits of a relay race. Team *MR* headed to the Three Molehills in Dorking, Surrey, to take part in this hilly, three-man event. Turn to page 110 to see how we got on.

And if you still haven't found anything to inspire you, we've listed 100 races you have to try. I hope you enjoy reading this issue and I wish you all the best with your running goals. Let's make 2016 the year of the runner!

Rick



CONTRIBUTORS



SIMON MESSENGER

Taking a break from his 'Around the world in 80 races' challenge, Simon dotes over his favourite shoe in our new feature, Sole Mates (p16).



ROGER KERRY

The associate professor in physiotherapy and rehabilitation science explains why 'The Wall' might just be a figment of your imagination (p40).



MARTIN YELLING

Men's Running's resident training expert spills the beans on the perfect way to get ready for the challenges of the marathon (p42).

FEBRUARY 2016

MEN'S Running

READ THIS, RUN BETTER

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Cover image: ultrarunner Ryan Sandes, Red Bull

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47 Ultimate Race Guide
One hundred of the very best
races – from 5K to ultra

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STAR
LETTER

MARSHAL AWE

I have to bring up the subject of parkrun, as we head into winter and the wet weather begins.

What a great idea they are; it's so nice to see men, women and kids enjoying a run with no pressure to do well. But the utmost respect and thanks goes to the marshals who turn out week after week to point you in the right direction. At a recent 5K at a cold and very wet Chester-le-Street, these marshals stood in the pouring rain with smiles on their faces. A BIG thank you to all these people who give up their time for our enjoyment.

Paul Roper, Sunderland

Ed: All power to parkrun and the marshalls that make it the success that it is. In our opinion,



anything that gets more people involved in the glorious pursuit of running gets the *MR* seal of approval. Here's a £100 voucher

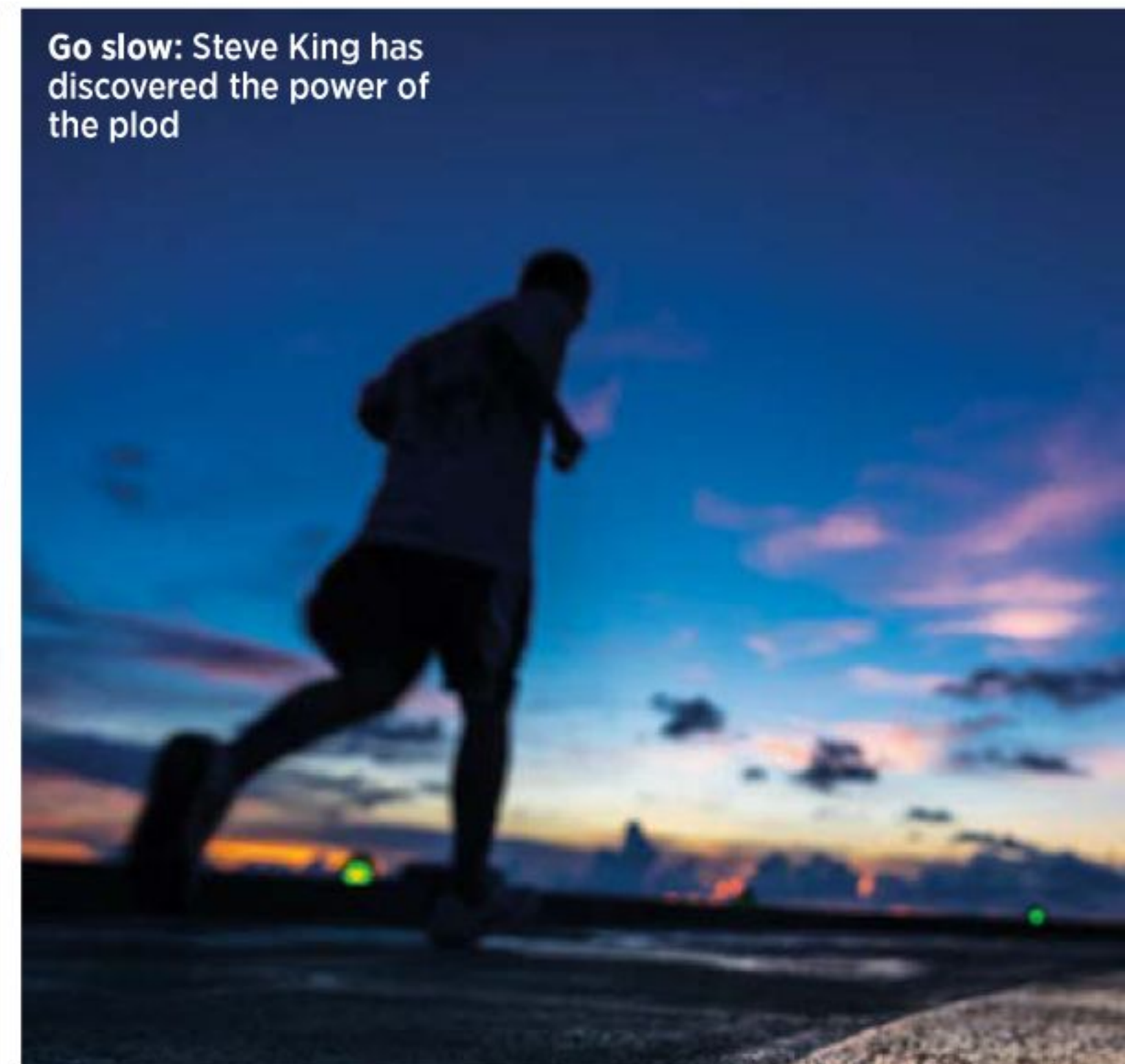
for some Soar Running kit to show off at your next parkrun.



WORTH
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The writer of this month's star letter receives a £100 voucher to spend at Soar Running. The lightweight, stylish, high-performance kit will keep you running strong, whatever the distance soarrunning.com

Go slow: Steve King has discovered the power of the plod



confident in my ability. Until recently, however, I never took the time to step back and appreciate running for all it's good for: de-stressing, reflection, time to yourself. It was only after I went for a run the other day – long, very slow and with no sense that I needed to push for a certain time – that I realised running doesn't have to be about improvement or breaking personal records. Sometimes, it's nice to just run for fun.

Steve King, Chichester

Ed: It's easy to let running become all about performance. When that happens, the fun gets stripped out of a training routine and, eventually, people give up. Good for you for rediscovering the spirit-lifting power of the plod!

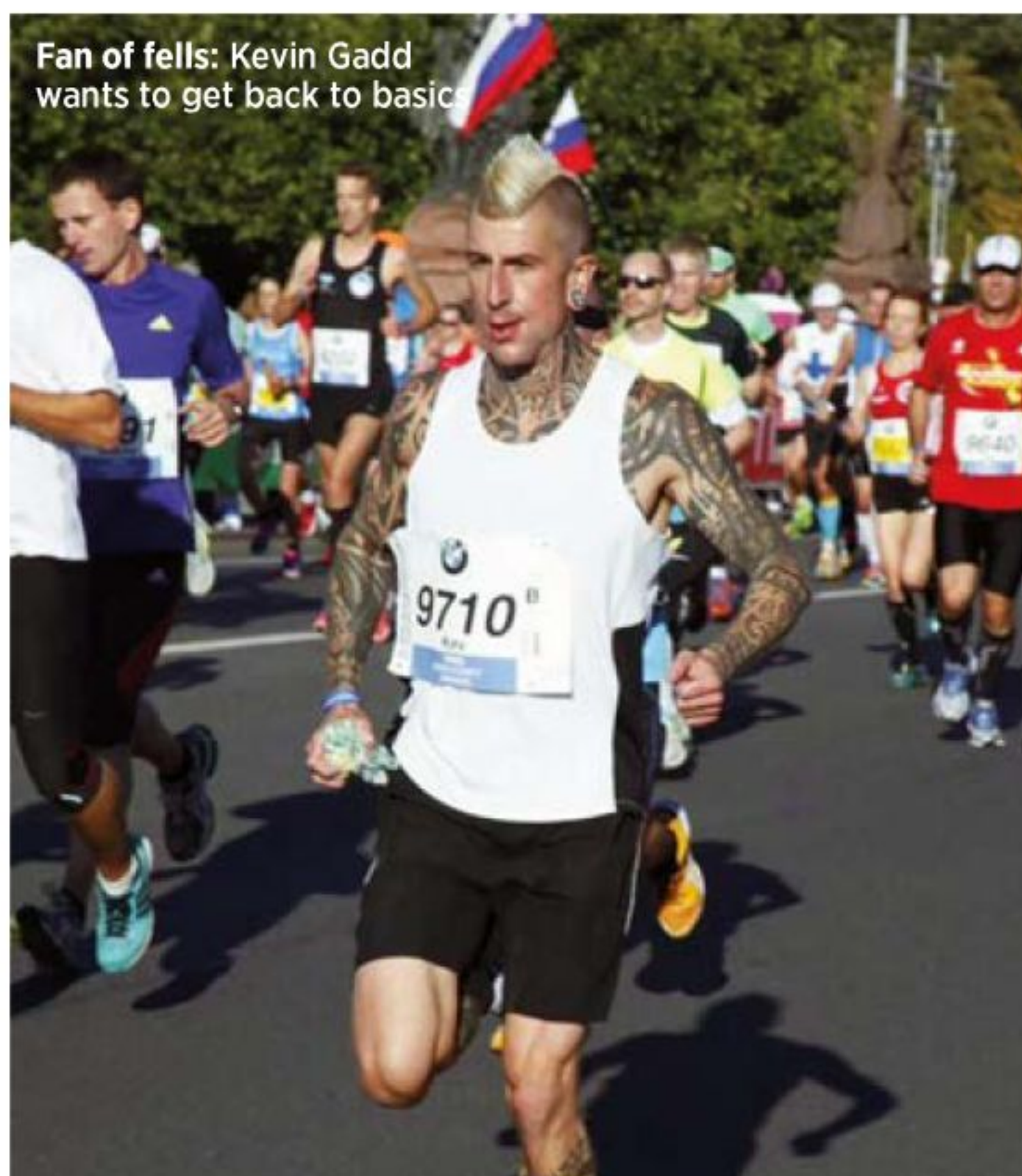
SHOE OBSESSIVE

I have a confession to make: I'm a running shoe addict. Road shoes, trail shoes, even those crazy barefoot shoes – I keep convincing myself I'm just one pair of trainers away from running success. But that's not how it works, is it?

John Bowen, Plymouth

Ed: Unfortunately not, John. You do also have to do some running. Sorry about that. Now, if you don't mind, there's a pair of turbo-charged carbon-fibre trainers that I'm bidding for on eBay.

Fan of fells: Kevin Gadd wants to get back to basics



society, fuelled on ego, faddism and gadgets. Some of the most extreme races available are fell races, which have no professional photographers, are about £10 to enter and only require a pair of shoes (with good grip). If you put a foot wrong at certain points while descending, you might die. Surely that's a tad more extreme than some of the typical mainstream events?

Kevin Gadd, Surrey

Ed: I've only taken part in one fell race and I am so glad there wasn't a photographer present to capture my broken, battered self being overtaken by men (and women) twice my age. No doubt about it, Kevin, fell running is the sport at its stripped-down, brutal best.

POWER TO THE PLOD

As someone relatively new to running (I started about a year ago), my focus up until this point has been all about improvement – getting quicker, running longer, feeling fitter. I'm now at a point where I have a good understanding of my strengths and weaknesses and feel fairly

TO FELL WITH PHOTOS

Nowadays, not only do we pay hundreds of pounds to enter various triathlons/ultras/Tough Mudders, we are also guaranteed a range of "professional" photos to buy to show off how "extreme" we are on various social media sites. Urgh... we have become a narcissistic



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www.runottawa.com





Wanaka, New Zealand

Braden Currie, a 26-year-old rising star in adventure racing and thought to be the “fittest man in New Zealand”, runs through pristine landscape near the town of Wanaka.
bradencurrie.com



MY RACE FACE



Races are not catwalks – which is lucky, because few of us look good coming down the home straight. Here's a selection of some of your best/worst race faces



Chris Watson
Bristol Half Marathon



Edward Norton
New Forest 10



Scott Zikmanis
Stafford Half Marathon

TOP
GURN



Mark Swift
Lutterworth 5 Mile



Matt Smith
Tough Mudder South West



Steve Lamb
Bridlington Half Marathon



Scott wins a 'Doggie Bag' from skincare brand Bulldog for all his grooming needs meetthebulldog.com



Want to share your Race Face?
email mensrunning@wildbunchmedia.co.uk

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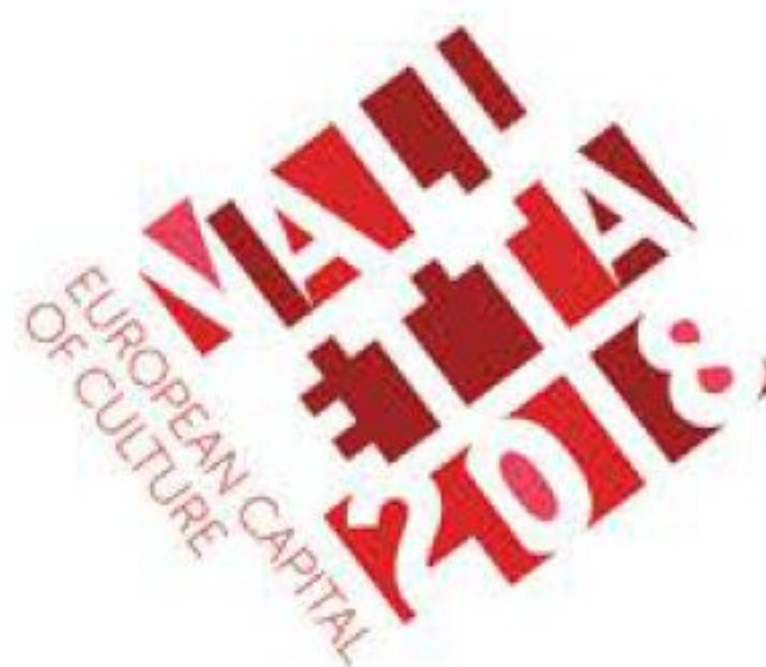
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FEBRUARY



PACE MAKER



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IN THE NEWS

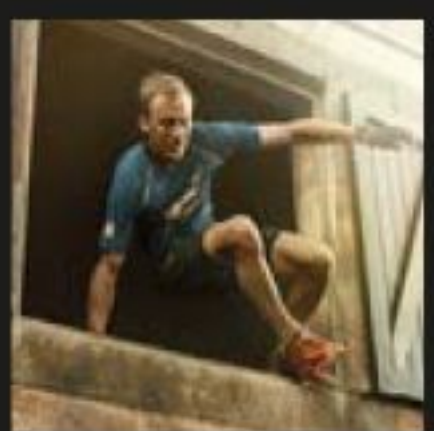
BIG IN JAPAN

Imagine a 200K two-day race that gets TV ratings up there with the *XFactor* and *Strictly*. That's Japan's Hakone Ekiden – an annual long distance relay early in the New Year featuring 10-strong teams from the country's top universities, each leg over a half-marathon. The running mad nation comes out in force, with millions tuning into the minute-by-minute TV coverage and crowds packing the route from Tokyo to the foothills of Mount Fuji and back again. The standard is improbably high, with the winning team last year averaging under 65 minutes per leg. And it makes for compelling drama as exhausted competitors push themselves to the limit and beyond.

japanrunningnews.blogspot.co.uk



15 MINS WITH...



JONATHAN ALBON, OBSTACLE RACER

How did you get into obstacle course racing (OCR)?

My first event was Tough Guy 2011. I saw an advertisement in a newspaper saying something like, 'Run, crawl, jump over fire and get really cold. Can you complete it?' I figured it sounded like fun, and it was, so I started to enter more. And I started to win them, too.

What's more important in OCR – running or strength?

Running, definitely. If there's a guy who can run 10K in 35 minutes and be OK at obstacles, and another guy who can run it in 60 minutes but be great at obstacles, the 35 minutes guy is going to win every time.

What does your weekly training look like?

Around 100-140K running, circuits for both strength and running, and some bouldering. Bouldering is great as it doesn't really feel like training because you're having fun, but it's building you up to have the best strength possible.

What, in your opinion, is the best OCR event?

I'd have to say Toughest; it's furthering the sport of obstacle course racing more than any other race. It even has live TV coverage to get everyone watching.

Who, if anyone, is your sporting hero?

Kilian Jornet. He runs because he loves to run and does it for all the right reasons.



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CUT HIM SOME SLACK

More proof that it's not about the kit. Amish man Leroy Stolfus ran the Harrisburg Marathon in Pennsylvania dressed in his community's austere traditional clothing of slacks and suspenders. The 22-year-old – who claims that he turns to running whenever he's tempted to sin – aced it, clocking a highly respectable 3hrs 5mins. He did succumb somewhat to modern fashion, donning a pair of trainers for the event. We reckon he'd have ducked under three hours if he'd stuck to some good old fashioned leather boots.

pennlive.com

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Q I'm a big-time sweater – as soon as I set foot out the door it seems to pour off me. What can I do to stem the flow?

Patrick Vinson, via Twitter

A We feel your pain, Patrick, but all is not lost. The most obvious solution is to switch to a high-strength deodorant, but we imagine you've tried that. High-tech running gear tends to be made with sweat-wicking material that will go some way to preventing a build up of sweat. To halt the post-run perspiration, take a shower at just below body temperature (too hot and you're adding to your heat; too cold and your freezing surface blood vessels and trapping core heat). Really, though, sweat is a sign of a good session and you should embrace it – but maybe not anyone else.

Team MR



SEB'S SHAKY START

It couldn't really have gone much worse for Seb Coe in his first four months as president of athletics' governing body the IAAF. A barrage of doping and corruption scandals has ravaged the sport, and mounting criticism over perceived conflict of interests forced Coe himself to give up an ambassadorial role with sports giant Nike. With Russia now suspended from international competition over allegations of state-sponsored doping, and lingering unease over the IAAF's award of the 2021 World Champs to Eugene, Oregon (home to Nike) without a vote, Coe admits the sport faces a long road to redemption. Fears of further grim revelations from running powerhouses Kenya and Jamaica raises the prospect that it might all get worse before it gets better.

bbc.co.uk

SWEET AND SOUR

Your sugary post-race sports drink may be about to get pricier. The government is coming under growing pressure to drop its opposition to a proposed 20% tax on sugary drinks designed to combat child obesity. David Cameron has long defended our right to glug low-tax pop, but has been ambushed by Jamie Oliver's campaign to wage war on our fizzy pleasures.

theweek.co.uk



THE QUESTION

WHAT'S THE STRANGEST THING YOU'VE FOUND WHILE RUNNING?

That's the question we asked you on Facebook. Here's what you said...



Rob Evans An iPhone 6 and a blow-up doll.

Marcus Reed I was running along when something caught the corner of my eye. I looked down and saw a little mole running in circles. I'd never seen a real-life mole before. Very weird.

Oliver Burton An angry wild boar while running through a forest in France. It then ran after me, which vastly improved my time!

Krav Lloyd A dead snake.

David Hart Watched a badger's carcass slowly deteriorate in a ditch over the 13 weeks of my first half-marathon training schedule. Once I'd seen it I couldn't stop myself looking every time I passed that spot.

Richard Thomas Green I found an old road bike with the old Shimano shifters on the downside. Did it up and am still riding it.

Dennis Yarwood A cassette tape: Soft Cell's *The Art of Falling Apart*.

Shaun Carr A sheep with its head stuck in a fence half an hour ago.

Michael Donlevy *Eastenders* actress Gillian Tayleforth.

f Want to join the debate? Get involved at [facebook.com/mensrunningmagazineuk](https://www.facebook.com/mensrunningmagazineuk)

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SOLE MATES

A love story between a man and his favourite pair of shoes



♥ ADMIRER

Simon Messenger, 29.

♥ LOVE INTEREST

Mizuno Wave Sayonara 2.

WHERE WE MET

In Run4It in Edinburgh, after a sales assistant wanted to introduce me to this new shoe he liked. When we first met, I had no idea they'd become so important to me.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

I thought they were a bit flashy but, to please the shop assistant, I agreed to take them for a spin on the treadmill and... ooh, actually, I liked them.

BEST DATE

Thrashing my marathon PB target in Rotterdam (2hrs 53mins).

WORST DATE

Running the Amsterdam Marathon after being ill for two days. The things we do for love, eh?

FAVOURITE MEMORY

Running in shorts and t-shirt in -10°C in eastern Kazakhstan and watching the world go by.

MOST ATTRACTIVE FEATURE

All five versions of them that I've bought fit me like a sock, despite my wide-ish feet. They've made me a better person (well, runner).

BUGBEARS

That the manufacturers will inevitably upgrade them to a new version. I know they say they'll be the same, just improved, but I don't know. It's very stressful.

YEARS TOGETHER:

We've been inseparable for a year and a half.

WHY WE WORK:

Cosy and dependable, they've kept me injury-free for almost 18 months.



OVER TO YOU



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STEVE'S WAY



Sage advice from former 'fat bloke' turned elite marathon runner Steve Way



Fat to fit: Steve at his biggest and, right, running the 2008 London Marathon



FIRST STEPS AS A RUNNER

It was just after six in the evening on the 18 September 2007 that my life took a turn for the better. I know the exact moment – as I have the Garmin upload to remind me of that first run – which would be the first steps of a 30,000-mile, seven-year journey to the Commonwealth Games marathon.

I'd tried running a few times in the past to help me with my ongoing weight issues, but I'd never stuck with it longer than a few weeks and I'd never thought of it as anything more than a weight-loss activity. So what was the big difference this time?

I hadn't made things easy for myself – I was the heaviest I'd ever been at 17 stone and my lungs had taken a serious battering from 20 years of heavy smoking – but I had one big thing in my favour: a target to aim for.

It doesn't matter how lucky you are with your genetics, everyone can set a running goal and this is the key to keeping you on track when you are just starting out as a runner. The target needs to be realistic but challenging, so depending on your current

health and natural ability this could be anything from completing a 5K or, in my case, attempting a sub-three-hour run at the 2008 London Marathon. Whatever you choose, just make sure you tell all your friends and family: not disappointing them is always a good motivator!

Once you have decided to get out there and run, nothing complicated is required to see big initial improvements. You don't need to worry about how fast you are going, just get out the door on a regular basis and get your heart rate up for a decent amount of time. When I first started that just meant going for a 30-minute run every other day.

As for that marathon? I ran it in 2hrs 35mins. Never underestimate what a bit of consistent training can do.



Q “Most of your successes have been on the road. Have you ever been tempted to dip your toe into the world of trail running?”

Colin Riley, Teignmouth



A Racing at the Swedish trail race Ultravasan 90K in 2014 was my attempt at “dipping my toe” into the intriguing world of trail running. It went OK, with a second-placed finish, but I was out of my comfort zone for the sections of technical trail in that race. However, it will certainly be something I work on when I decide that my road speed might be a thing of the past!

“DON'T UNDERESTIMATE WHAT A BIT OF CONSISTENT TRAINING CAN DO FOR YOUR RUNNING”



OVER TO YOU

Got a question for Steve? Tweet us: [@mensrunninguk](https://twitter.com/mensrunninguk)

TIP OF THE MONTH

ALCOHOL FREE ZONE

Going alcohol free as a New Year's resolution? Add some incentive and give yourself more chance of sticking to it by targeting a race as the end date. You can then celebrate that PB with a very well-deserved pint!



MY RUNNING LIFE

Tim Peake

Astronaut Tim Peake is set to become the first man to run a marathon in space. *Men's Running* caught up with him to find out more about running in zero gravity

On Sunday 24 April, thousands of earthlings will huff and puff their way around the Virgin Money London Marathon.

But 400 kilometres above, on the International Space Station, one man will be attempting something even more extraordinary. British astronaut Tim Peake is hoping to become the first man to run a marathon in space.

He'll do so on a treadmill while an iPad beams out a digital replica of the course, allowing him to feel as though he's running through the streets of London. *Men's Running* floated a few questions his way...

Hi, Tim. What inspired this mission?

It's always been an ambition of mine to run a marathon in space. I had to get the whole thing cleared with the European Space Agency, but I'm delighted that we've been able to make it a reality.

Will you be turning up the oxygen levels to make it a bit easier?

Unfortunately not! Too much oxygen would become a fire risk, so we

definitely won't be turning it up. It's about 22°C in the International Space Station, though, so it's a bit warmer than I'd like. I grew up running in the UK, and I love running on cold, wet, windy days, so running in that heat will be a challenge.

What's your running history?

I've been a runner all my life and ran the London Marathon back in 1999 in a time of 3hrs 18 minutes. I particularly enjoy cross-country running. In fact, my family think the biggest challenge for me will be running on a treadmill, as they know I'd rather be in the hills.

How does running in space compare to running on Planet Earth?

One of the big differences is that [on the Space Station] you have to run in a harness – without it, you'd float off. Because we're in zero gravity, the harness has to replicate my body weight, but it's like running with a backpack on. I don't think I'll be setting any personal bests. I've set myself a goal of anywhere between three-and-a-half to four hours.

What kind of pre-race nutrition will be available in space?

We have a couple of different menus we can choose from. We have the standard menu and then we can supplement this with some 'bonus food'. So I'll be able to have a bacon sarnie on the morning of the marathon!

Are you going to get the other astronauts to cheer you on and hand you jelly babies?

I certainly will be! They've all been thoroughly supportive so I'm sure they'll be there cheering me on. It's a Sunday, thankfully, which is more of a relaxed day on the Space Station so they'll all be there helping out.

What will you be wearing on your feet: moon boots or trainers?

They won't let me wear moon boots on the treadmill, I'm afraid. The T2 treadmill we run on is a lot shorter and narrower than standard treadmills, so moon boots wouldn't work! 📺

Tim Peake is running the 'Digital Virgin Money London Marathon' for The Prince's Trust princes-trust.org.uk





Ale to the king: Andy Holden leads the pack during the 1978 Sandbach Marathon

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

04 / 01 / 2014

On 4 January 2014, running lost one of its most colourful characters. Andy Holden, an NHS dentist by profession, managed to balance a stellar running career with an unquenchable love of real ale and life in general. Chief among his many noteworthy achievements is his victory at the 1979 Bermuda Marathon – made more remarkable by the fact he reputedly drank 10 pints the previous night. Holden won cross-country gold with the England team that same year, but he was arguably more proud of a slightly more leftfield achievement: drinking 100 pints and running 100 miles in a single week – more than 14 a day of each. On one of his many long runs, Holden came across a dog that had been weighed down with bricks and left to drown in a canal. He rescued the pooch, adopted it, and Schnicky became his faithful running companion. Holden died aged 65, having suffered health problems following an aortic aneurysm three years before. The world is a much duller place without him.



SEPTEMBER 11TH, 2016
VILNIUS, LITHUANIA



UNFLAT
UNBORING
UNBELIEVABLE

"Danske Bank Vilnius Marathon has become almost equally big race in quality as Danske Bank Oslo Marathon."

Kjell Vigestad Kondis blogger from Norway

"Quite demanding sightseeing route is the marathon in Vilnius."

Matthias Thiel, LaufZeit - editor from Germany

"Wonderful organization with loads of music and fans. Suuuuper experience, you should run there."

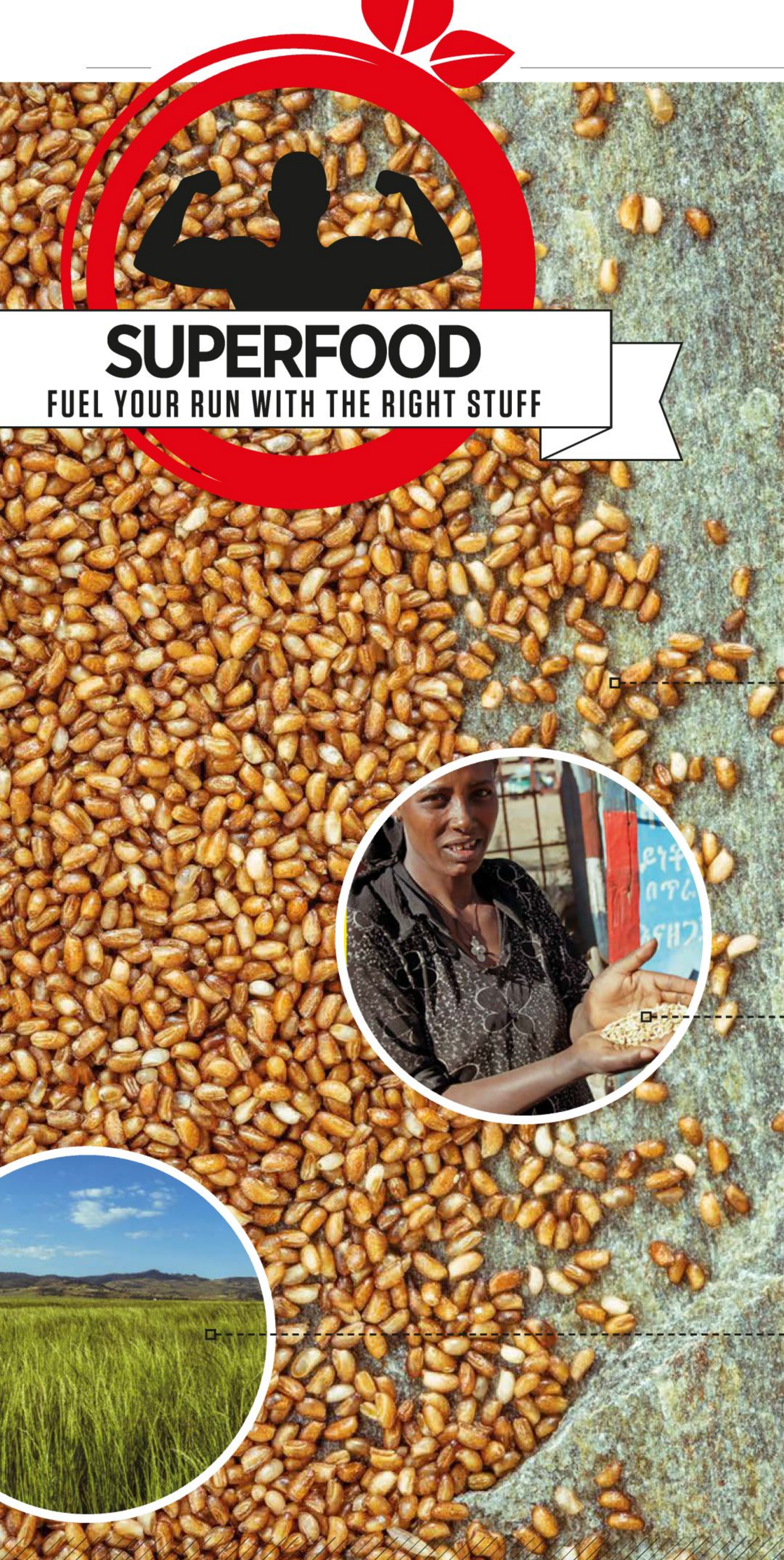
Fiolka - Life on the RUN blogger from Poland

MARATHON

HALF MARATHON

10KM

REGISTER
www.vilniusmarathon.lt



TOP CROP

Introducing teff, the Ethiopian super grain

WHAT IS IT?

Teff is a species of lovegrass native to Ethiopia and Eritrea. The nutrient-dense grain forms the basis of the Ethiopian diet and is grown by over six million farmers. Ground into flour, it is used to make injera: a fermented flatbread (often used as an edible plate) that's central to Ethiopian cuisine. Teff's beauty is in its durability and high yield; it will grow in almost any climate, requires just 36 hours to sprout and as little as one handful of the tiny seed is enough to sow an entire field.

WHAT DO YOU DO WITH IT?

When ground down, teff can be substituted for wheat flour in just about anything. As it's naturally gluten-free, teff is working its way into health shops across the world. For basic boiling (as with rice or quinoa), simply cook one cup of the grain in three cups of water for 20 minutes. Alternatively, allowing one cup of water per one cup of teff, and cooking for six minutes, will result in crunchy seeds perfect for sprinkling on to the dish of your choice.

WHY IS IT GOOD FOR MY HEALTH?

Teff's calcium content is far superior to all other grains, with one cup offering 123mg – equivalent to half a cup of cooked spinach. It's also high in quality carbohydrate, protein and lysine, an amino acid that helps to preserve muscle tissue – which might just explain Ethiopians' continued success in long-distance events.



TAKE ON 13.1 MILES?
TRY AND STOP ME
Warwick Half Marathon

bhf.org.uk/Warwick

3 April 2016

FIGHT FOR EVERY HEARTBEAT

Registered charity numbers 225971 and SC039426



**13.1 MILES OF
MUD, SWEAT
AND HILLS**

Harewood House Half Marathon

bhf.org.uk/Harewood

28 February 2016

FIGHT FOR EVERY HEARTBEAT



Registered charity numbers 225971 and SC039426

CHEESY POLENTA WITH GARLIC MUSHROOMS

Polenta is a lot like mashed potato – comforting and a good source of slow-release carbs. Add a little grated cheese and top with garlicky mushrooms for a hearty pre-race meal.

INGREDIENTS

Serves 2

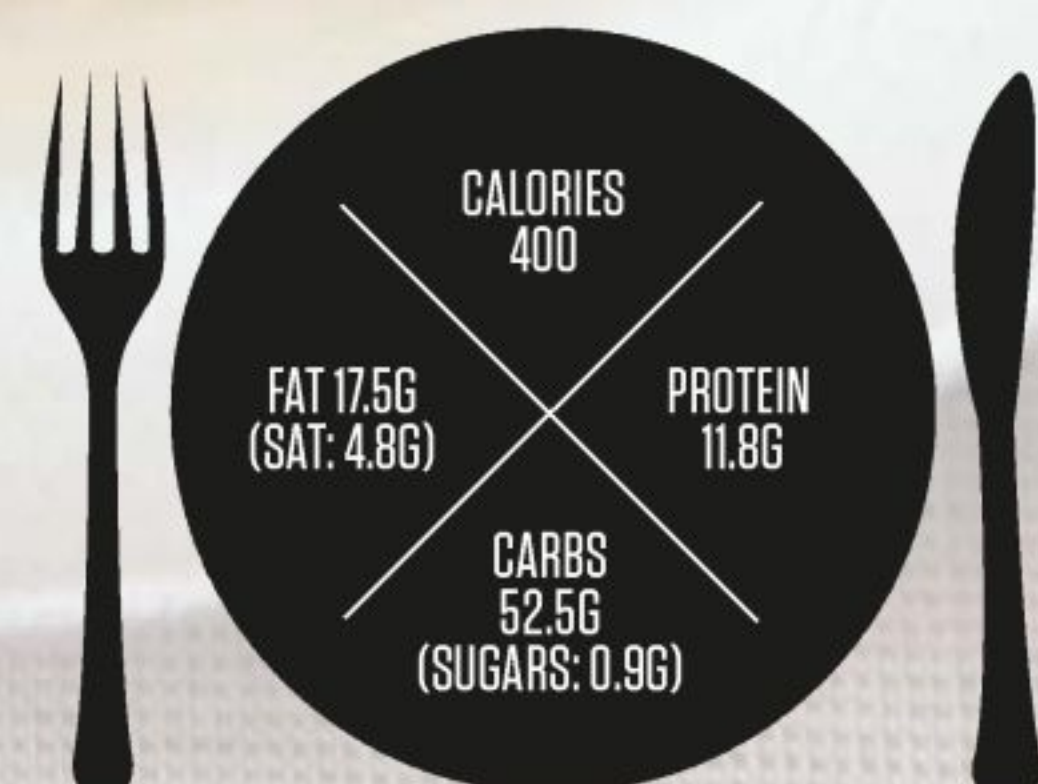
- 1tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1tsp ground cumin
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 15g dried mushrooms
- 500ml beef stock
- 100g pearl barley
- 2 lamb chump chops, 150g each
- Thyme leaves
- Seasoning

METHOD

1. Heat the olive oil in a large frying pan over a medium heat. Add the garlic, cook for 20 seconds, add the mushrooms and cook for five minutes.
2. Meanwhile, bring the vegetable stock to a boil in a pan and slowly whisk in the polenta.
3. Continue to cook over a medium heat, stirring continuously, until it reaches a thick and creamy consistency.
4. Stir half the grated Parmesan into the polenta and the chopped parsley into the mushrooms.
5. Season the polenta to taste.
6. Spoon the polenta onto two warmed plates, sprinkle with the remaining Parmesan and top with the garlic mushrooms to serve.



ON YOUR PLATE PER SERVING



INDONESIAN SPICED RICE WITH EGG AND MACKEREL

Rice, eggs and mackerel – all providing protein – served in a spicy mix with crunchy spring onions and peppers. A delicious combination to soothe aching limbs.

INGREDIENTS

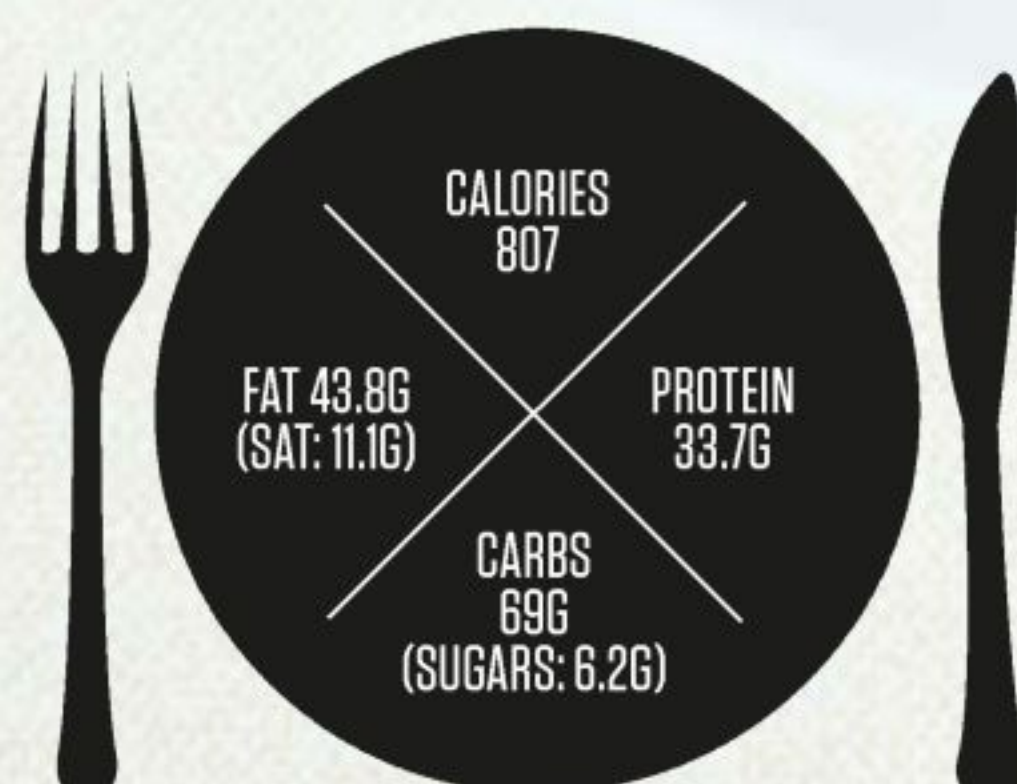
Serves 2

- 150g basmati rice
- 1/2tbsp coconut oil
- 1 garlic clove, peeled and chopped
- 2cm piece fresh root ginger, peeled and finely chopped
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 4 spring onions, sliced
- 1 red pepper, deseeded and sliced
- 1/2tbsp curry paste
- 1tbsp soy sauce
- 2 smoked mackerel fillets, flaked
- 1tbsp cashew nuts
- 1-2tbsp roughly torn coriander leaves

METHOD

1. Cook the rice according to the instructions on the packet.
2. Meanwhile, heat half the coconut oil in a wok or large frying pan and sauté the garlic and ginger for 30 seconds, before adding the eggs and scrambling quickly with a spatula. Move it onto a plate.
3. Heat the remaining coconut oil and sauté the spring onion and red pepper for two minutes.
4. Stir in the curry paste and cook for one minute.
5. Drain the rice and add to the pan along with the soy sauce, egg, mackerel and cashew nuts.
6. Stir in the coriander leaves and serve.

ON YOUR PLATE PER SERVING





For **Michael Jewes**, a graduation photo provided an unwelcome reality check. By taking up running, however, he's managed to shed six stone – and says he won't be stopping any time soon

Being overweight is a strange situation to find yourself in. Initially, you don't seem to notice yourself putting on the pounds. One day, however, a photo will turn up on Facebook, or the like, which makes you realise that something has gone horribly wrong somewhere along the line.

For me, it was my graduation photos in 2011. After three years of binge drinking, snacking and generally doing nothing at university, my body had definitely paid the price. But even then, I didn't do anything about it. For the three years after uni I lived and worked in Germany, where I lost three stone, gained a couple again, lost it. Blah, blah, blah. It was only after this certain degree of weight loss/weight gain that I looked back upon my graduation photos with horror.

Upon my return to the UK in July 2014, I decided to do something about it and immediately joined a gym. After spending five minutes huffing and puffing away on the treadmill (I think I managed to run about 650 metres),

"I AM LEANER, FITTER, HEALTHIER AND HAPPIER THAN I HAVE EVER BEEN – RUNNING HAS CHANGED MY LIFE"



I gave up and spent the next few months slaving away on the rowing machine. Coupled with a change in diet and huge reduction in alcohol intake, I saw my body shape gradually starting to change.

In December 2014, I decided to put my new physique to the test on the treadmill. I was shocked to discover that I could now run for around 2.5K without stopping. This was the motivation I needed. Over the next few weeks, I ran on that treadmill three to four times per week, gradually increasing my distance each week.

On the 1 February 2015, I ran the Cancer Research UK London Winter Run (10K) and finished in a time of 53 minutes. Riding on this wave of running enthusiasm, I continued on the treadmill for a couple of months before finally switching to – and overcoming my fear of – outdoor running in June 2015.

My running is coming on in leaps and bounds now: I completed the Wimbledon



Common Half Marathon on the 26 July with a finishing time of 1hrs 50mins 6secs, and also competed in the Bournemouth Half Marathon with a finishing time of 1hrs 48mins 43secs. I have plans to enter more half-marathons, 16-mile races, 10Ks and Tough Mudders over the next few months, and have applied for a charity place in the Virgin Money London Marathon next year.

I am officially six stone lighter than I was at my graduation – three stone of which has been lost in the past 10 months. I am leaner, fitter, healthier and happier than I have ever been. Running has well and truly changed my life. Onwards and upwards!



OVER TO YOU

Have you gone from fat to fit?
Email your weight-loss story to
mensrunning@wildbunchmedia.co.uk

FEBRUARY

TRAIN



INSIDE

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38 RUNNING RESOLUTIONS **40** TALKING HEADS
42 MARATHON TRAINING **44** WORKOUT

ANATOMY OF A RUNNER



NAME: JESSE OWENS
DISTANCE: 100M, 200M
AND LONG JUMP

RUN LIKE OWENS

■ FAST FEET

Owens said the secret behind his success was simple: "I let my feet spend as little time on the ground as possible." This was at the behest of his coaches Charles Riley and Larry Snyder, who knew that reduced ground contact time would equal quicker running. Build your own fast feet by adding in 10 minutes of skipping to your weekly running routine.

■ JUMP TO IT

It's no coincidence that many sprinters are also decent long jumpers: the fast-twitch fibres needed for quick running are the same needed for great leaps. Build your own explosive power by adding in some plyometrics to your cross-training: box jumps, burpees and jumping squats.

■ SPRINT PRACTICE

While sprinting might seem like an irrelevance to the long-distance enthusiast, incorporating short bursts of high-intensity running can have a great effect on your times over a variety of races. Try 10 x one-minute intervals, with one-minute recovery between each effort, run at 80-90% of your top speed.

"HIS NATURAL SPRING AND EXPLOSIVE POWER SAW HIM CROWNED KING OF THE SPRINT TRACK AND LONG JUMP PIT"

INSPIRATION

Owens' coach, Charles Riley, once took him to a racetrack to watch horses run. He asked his charge to mimic the animals: how they focused only on the finish line; how no energy was wasted. In his post-Olympic years, a hard-up Owens would actually race horses for money. "People said it was degrading for an Olympic champion to run against a horse," he said, "But what was I supposed to do? You can't eat four gold medals."

CHEST

To say that Owens' early life was tough, is something of an understatement. The day after his fifth birthday, he developed a fibrous bump on his chest. Unable to afford a doctor to remove it, his mother performed the surgery herself – with a sterilized kitchen knife. Owens lost a substantial amount of blood but survived.

LEAP

More than a brilliant sprinter, Owens was also an exceptional long jumper. His natural spring and explosive power saw him crowned king of track and pit. Years later, Carl Lewis would replicated Owens' success over the long jump and sprinting events – both of which require speed, strength and the genetic golden ticket of lots of high-twitch fibres.

SHOES

Unlike Adolf Hitler, shoemaker Adi Dassler didn't view the Berlin Games as a vehicle for Nazi propaganda but as a chance to launch his fledgling shoe business. He was eager that Owens wear his handcrafted spikes. The sprinter accepted – and Dassler went on to launch Adidas to global acclaim.



LEAN

Owens' aggressive lean was the classic sprinting profile. Bodyweight forward, arms and legs driving, it allowed him to get up to top speed as quickly as possible. Most running coaches recommend distance runners lean slightly from the ankle.

ARMS

Owens' powerful arm action was another facet of his near-perfect running form. These pistons could help him explode out of the box and away from the competition.

LEGS

Riley's instructions to Owens were to "run as though the track is on fire", and Owens took him at his word. This translated to minimal ground-contact time and incredible leg speed – both of which are huge assets to the aspiring sprinter.

AWESOME OWENS

Born in Oakville, Alabama, the youngest of 10 children, James "Jesse" Cleveland Owens' childhood was one of basic survival. As a boy, he worked different jobs in his spare time, including working in a shoe repair shop. His running talent was first recognised by his junior high track coach, Charles Riley, who encouraged Owens to pursue a career in athletics. A few years later, he'd equalled the world record for the 100-yard dash (9.4 secs). Owens' defining moment, however, came at the 1936 Berlin Olympics, where his four gold medals – in the 100m, 200m, 4x100m relay and long jump – were a rebuke to the Nazi party's theories about Aryan superiority. Despite these achievements, Owens' post-athletic career saw him forced to work a string of menial jobs, including time spent as a gas station attendant, before the US government made him a goodwill ambassador. He died, aged 66, in Tucson, Arizona.



RUNNING WITH YOUR BELOVED

Welcome to our article on running etiquette. This month we look at the art of jogging with your partner

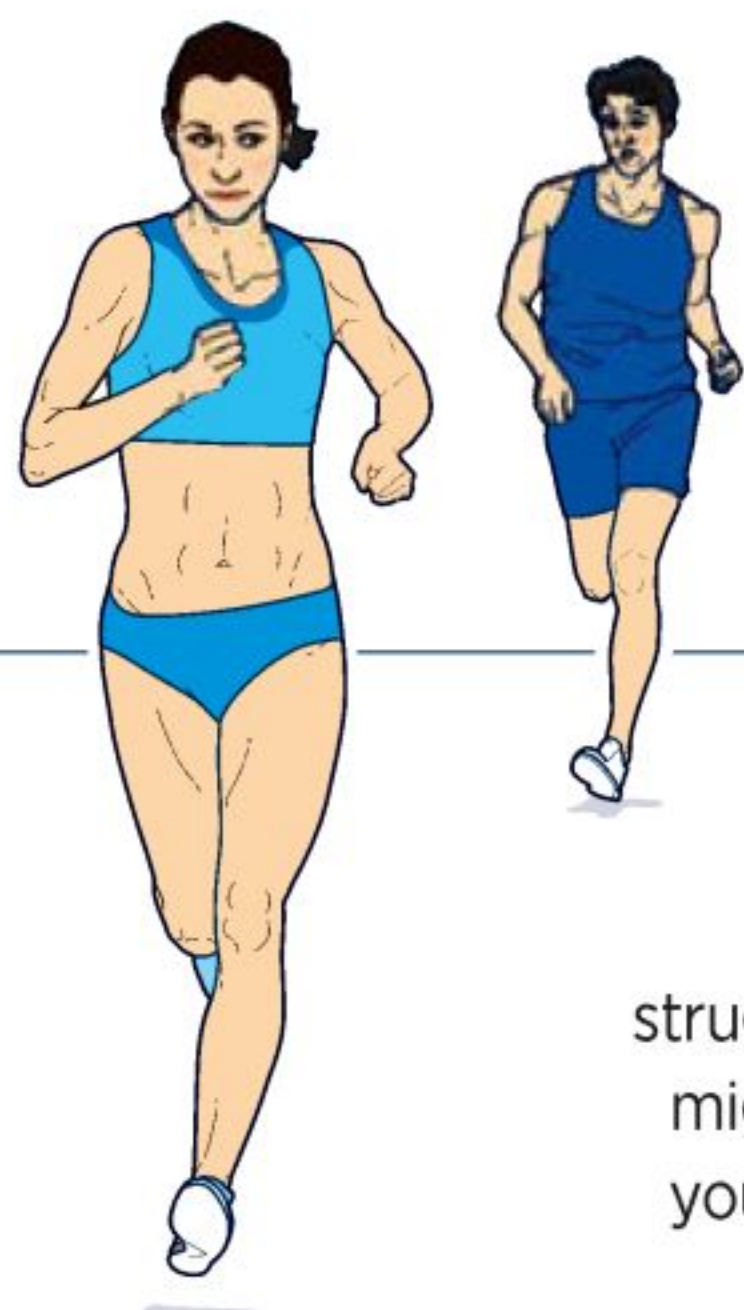


1. DON'T PUSH IT

Gentle encouragement is fine. If your partner's 'uhhming and ahing' about lacing up their trainers, simply explain how much better they'll feel afterwards; how much quality time it affords the two of you, etc. However, if your loved one is stubborn in their refusal, accept it graciously and move on.

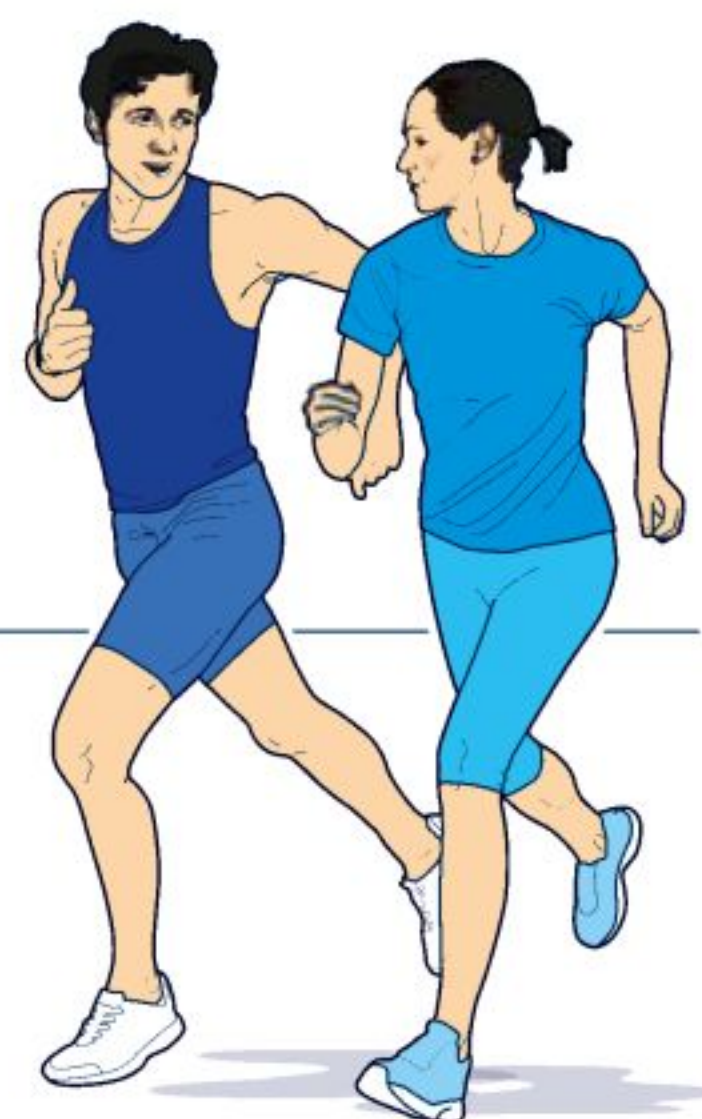
2. KEEP PACE

Are you going for a gentle plod or a high-intensity workout? Do not underestimate the importance of that question. Leave them in a cloud of ego-tinged dust and you'll be a one-man team in no time. But struggle to keep up and they might just trade you in for a younger, quicker (probably better looking) model.



3. CHANGE THE CONVERSATION

If, when you finally make it out the door together, your running chat revolves around mortgage repayments, you will begin to associate your runs with the very thing you should be using them as a sanctuary from: domestic life. Use your run time to talk about something completely different – you'll soon find that you won't want to stop.



4. EYES ON THE PRIZE

No, you did not notice the beautiful, lycra-clad brunette sprint past: "Quick, was she? Making it look effortless, was she?" "I didn't notice, darling, I was too busy trying to keep up with you [insert humbled chuckle]."

5. BE A PARTNER, NOT A COACH

Your cruising along, when suddenly you notice her running style. Pounding gait, heel strike, hunched back. This is no time for technique analysis. Your mid-run critique will only serve to elicit days of one-word answers, so hold fire.



ROMANTIC RACES

■ Marathon du Médoc

When it comes to marathons, there's only one choice for the aspiring gentleman runner: France's Marathon du Médoc. Swap the bottles of Lucozade for glasses of wine at this romantic 26.2-miler, set in France's idyllic Médoc region. Choose between red or white at the 23 aid stations, which also lay on a hearty array of steak, oysters, ice cream, cheese and waffles. It's fair to say that you're unlikely to be breaking any PBs, but you will earn some serious brownie points.

Romance rating: ♥♥♥♥♥

marathondumedoc.com

■ Valentine's 10K

What better way to reaffirm your love for one another than by taking part in a race on Valentine's Day? OK, we admit it: there's nothing overtly lovey-dovey about this flat and fast 10K in the London borough of Kingston-upon-Thames. But think of it like this: you'll have really earned that candle-lit dinner in the evening.

Romance rating: ♥♥♥♥♥

26point2.co.uk/valentines10K

■ Venice Marathon

Better known for its gondolas than its long-distance races, Venice is nonetheless home to a well respected 26.2-miler. Take your beloved for a romantic marathon weekend in this floating paradise. The local pasta will also make for some great pre-race carbo-loading and a chance to impress with your expert grasp of the Italian language. Molto bene!

Romance rating: ♥♥♥♥♥

venicemarathon.it/en

OVER TO YOU

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CROSS-TRAINING

OF THE MONTH

YOGA

Everyone from old-school runners to new-age travellers swears by yoga. **Rick Pearson** finds out why it's such a good cross-training activity

Among the many cross-training activities recommended to runners, one word reappears more frequently than any other: yoga. But what is it about this ancient practice of stretching, strengthening and breathing that can help the modern pavement-pounder? I've come to Claire Horton's Breathe London Yoga at the Sunshine International Arts hoping to find the answer.

CORE

The core is often confused with the superficial abdominal muscles, or 'six-pack' muscles. "There is actually a whole world of muscles, actions and energy contained within the core," says Claire. "Through regular practice, yoga creates a strong core, but it also helps you to find an inner stillness that will allow your strength to develop further."

POSTURE

Slumped behind desks all day, it's easy to let your posture suffer. Yoga is the perfect antidote. "By opening a tight chest, and strengthening the lower back and abdominals, yoga can improve seated posture," says Claire. "On a more subtle level, it can help to develop an awareness of your holding patterns, which may stem

from physical and emotional imbalances, so that you notice when, and why, your posture begins to suffer."

FOCUS

Hone your mental focus with yoga. "A couple of years ago, I used myself as a case study," says Claire. "I stopped running around Christmas time and took myself off to India for yoga training. When I returned in March, I wasn't super fit, but I could run faster for longer. My posture and breathing had improved, but the main difference was an unwavering focus. This is where I think the greatest benefit to the long-distance runner lies: in an ability to remain in the present and experience the now."

HIPS

It's important to keep the hips happy. Running can create tight hip flexors, and yoga can help to loosen them again. "Although pounding the pavements after a stressful day chained to the desk feels like a good tension release, remember to spend some time opening the hips. To do this, you can use postures that open the front of the hips and muscles surrounding the pelvis, such as backbends. However, it's best to first seek advice from a yoga practitioner so they can create a sequence appropriate to you."

CALVES

Yoga postures help to loosen tight areas such as calves, which become overused when running, but they can also be used to build strength through the lower leg and stability through the ankles. "Keeping these areas balanced, lengthening tight muscles and strengthening supporting muscles can help to prevent injury. I do this by ending each run with a short routine focusing on hips, hamstrings and calves. I also incorporate a foam roller for the calves and IT band."

For more information on Breathe London Yoga or to book a lesson, please visit breathelondonyoga.co.uk



DEAN KARNAZES, ULTRAMARATHON MAN

“I’ve been doing yoga for the past 10 years. The type I do is Bikram, or ‘hot yoga’, during which the room temperature is typically set between 102 to 110 degrees. It’s greatly improved my overall flexibility, strength, heat acclimatisation and mental toughness, and I would definitely recommend it as an activity that all runners can benefit from.”

Dean Karnazes is an athlete and NY Times best-selling author **ultramarathonman.com**



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AEROBIC BENEFITS:

MUSCLE BUILDING:

SAFETY:

VALUE FOR MONEY:

FUN FACTOR:

VIVA LA RESOLUTIONS!

The five promises every runner should be making – and sticking to – in 2016



■ DITCH THE WATCH (OCCASIONALLY)

Time matters to runners, but it isn't the only thing that matter. Stop fretting about your split-times and occasionally go for a watch-free run. As Richard Askwith, author of *Running Free*, says: "Running is the simplest of sports: that's its beauty. It shouldn't be gadget-dependent."



■ BUDDY UP

Much as it's nice to get some 'alone time', running is a great activity to do in a pair or as part of a larger group. Alongside the social element, it's easier to run faster with others. "There is always someone on any given day who will like pushing the pace," says Team GB 1500m runner Ross Murray. "This, in turn, means you have to run quicker or be left behind."

© Reebok

■ STRETCH IT OUT

While the running world is divided on the benefits of a pre-run warm-up, few question the wisdom of a post-run stretch. "Now I always finish my runs a little way from home and add in a five-minute walk at the end followed by some dynamic and static stretching," says marathon man Steve Way. "My goal with this post-run routine is to ensure that, when I next go for a run, my legs feel as fresh as possible."



■ EMBRACE THE ICE BATH

The thought of jumping in an ice bath may seem about as inviting as the prospect of slamming your head in a car door, but there's no denying its recovery-boosting qualities. Cold water immersion suppresses inflammation and helps to flush out harmful metabolic debris from your muscles. In short, it's positively brrr-illiant for runners.

■ TEST YOUR LIMITS

Now and again, it's nice to test yourself. Maybe that's running a new distance or trying your hand at a trail race – anything that pushes you outside your comfort zone. "Only ever playing to your strengths can make you weak," says Team GB 24hr runner Robbie Britton. "Challenging yourself is the better, braver option."



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TALKING HEADS

Runners often talk about hitting 'the wall' during the latter part of a marathon. But does it actually exist?

EXPERT ADVICE



Roger Kerry is an associate professor in physiotherapy and rehabilitation science at the University of Nottingham

NO

"HITTING 'THE WALL' SEEMS TO BE THE BRAIN FORCING US TO SLOW DOWN TO PROTECT OURSELVES"

DOES 'THE WALL' REALLY EXIST?

■ **There's a lot of talk about hitting 'the wall' in marathon running. Does it actually exist or is it a figment of the imagination?**

It exists in the sense that consistently people report an experience with similar characteristics: "My legs felt like lead"; "It felt like a ton weight on my back", etc. However, defining it as an absolute phenomenon is really difficult. Most traditional theories related the experience to muscle-glycogen depletion, but there is more to it than that, including significant cognitive components. I would say it falls somewhere between actually existing and being a figment of the imagination.

■ **What's the difference between hitting the wall and just being understandably tired towards the end of a marathon?**

These two phenomena are very much related; you could think of 'hitting the wall' and becoming 'just tired' on a continuum of fatigue, if you like. However, it's not just the energy side that is important here. The brain has a critical role. A series of studies examining long-distance performance in elite athletes led Alan St Claire Gibson and colleagues (including Tim Noakes) to develop a model of fatigue where the brain is central to governing pace. The brain responds to the onset of energy depletion and other sensory stimuli by governing the amount of muscle fibres that can be recruited, which in turn reduces pace. Fatigue is simply the associated emotion to this event. Hitting

the wall seems to be the brain forcing us to slow down to protect ourselves.

■ **Can the wall be avoided? If so, how?**

Yes, given that many runners do not experience it. It seems that fasted runs during early stages of a marathon programme can help train the body to perform in low-muscle-glycogen states. However, the cognitive dimensions are critical once again. Studies have shown that the onset of the wall is sooner in runners who internalise thoughts that distract them from the run, e.g. over-focusing on a specific aching muscle. The wall can be delayed with the conscious focus on external and associative thoughts, e.g. focusing on split-times or positive monitoring of physical state (technique, posture, etc). The wall does exist, in some senses. However, myths around it being either 'inevitable' or 'avoided with carbo-loading' can be washed away with a review of the scientific thought behind it.

■ **Is the wall avoidable only through use of energy gels and sports supplements?**

Nutrition is of obvious importance. Whether this has to be in the form of energy gels or 'specialist' sports drinks is not so important. These are just one form of access to nutrition. There are, of course, many forms of carbohydrate: dried fruit, nuts, pretzels, jelly babies, natural energy bar recipes, glucose in water, etc. These would most often work out a lot cheaper than manufactured gels and drinks.



EXPERT ADVICE



Glenn Kearney is the head sports nutritionist at Etixx UK and has previously worked with UK Athletics
etixxsports.com

YES

■ **There's a lot of talk about hitting the wall in marathon running. Does it actually exist or is it a figment of the imagination?**

The wall is the term used to describe the physiological symptoms of running low on muscle glycogen. Once muscle and liver glycogen stores are depleted, the body will rely on fat almost exclusively for energy, which is quite inefficient in untrained individuals, the resulting effect of which is reduction in the muscle's ability to function normally and a feeling of extreme fatigue.

■ **What's the difference between hitting the wall and just being understandably tired towards the end of a marathon?**

Fatigue is normal in all athletes, trained or not. Consistent effort over a prolonged period will cause small tears in the muscle fibre and, over time, these will become sore. However, running carb-low is a different physiological reaction: the feeling of effort from contracting and expanding the muscle with low to zero glycogen. You have literally run out of fuel to support running at that pace, and pacing correctly is absolutely key to finishing your marathon running instead of walking. Effective training and nutrition can ensure you avoid the wall, but general fatigue will always set in.

■ **Can the wall be avoided? If so, how?**

Yes, you can avoid the wall. First thing's first, it's about training at a level to prepare you for the effort. Starting well-fuelled is important, too; even if you've eaten well the night before, liver glycogen will have been depleted overnight. Carbohydrate drinks and/or gels will also provide necessary carbohydrates and, in the case of the former, hydration.

■ **Elite runners don't appear to hit the wall, yet they seemingly take on very little fluid or gels during the race. Doesn't this suggest that hitting the wall is a bit of a myth?**

It's more of a myth that elite runners don't take on carbs during the race. Each will have bottles positioned at several points around the course and most will be filled with a carbohydrate-based drink. Don't forget also that their pre-race prep doesn't consist of getting up early to travel across a city and then wait for an hour or two in the cold. The amateur runner has slightly depleted energy before even reaching the start line.

Master the MARATHON

You've only gone and done it: you've signed up for a marathon, 26.2 miles of glory (and a little pain). **Martin Yelling** offers some welcome words of wisdom

EXPERT ADVICE



Martin Yelling is an endurance coach, ex-international athlete and husband to Olympic marathoner Liz Yelling. With a half-marathon PB of 66 minutes, Martin specialises in running coaching and hosts the Marathon Talk podcast.

Now is the time to be getting properly stuck into your marathon training. Doing so will help to make the big day possible and pain free – well, at least hurt a little less. That's what training does: it prepares your body and mind for what's to come – 26.2 miles of pace, pounding and puffing. Whether you're a first-timer or a PB-hunter, the training you do, or don't do, will make or break your marathon. Here's how to get it bang on.

GET GOING

If you've done zero, nada, nothing, since you were forced to run around muddy fields at school, don't panic. Start slowly. Begin by developing a regular walk or

walk/run routine. Plan it carefully and stick to it. Progress your distance slowly and carefully and avoid over-committing to an unattainable amount of exercise each week or an unrealistic distance.

Aim for three walk-runs, jogs or runs each week, and take your time to gradually run more and walk less. Add just a few minutes each time until you can continuously run for 60 minutes three times a week. Don't rush it. Layer your training up gradually so you become more confident and more competent at running as the weeks tick by.

BREAK IT DOWN

Breaking your training down into clear phases with a focus for each isn't just for speedsters or marathon pros. Even if it's your first marathon, having some structure will help you see your progress clearly, stay motivated and arrive at the start line in tip-top shape.

Weeks 1-4: Build your regular running routine and do the basics. Whether that's three, four, five or more runs a week, it'll take four weeks to simply adjust to your running routine.

Weeks 5-8: Build your stamina and stick to your routine. Get stronger and start to go for longer. Build the distance you are able to cover in a single run and grow in confidence as you feel fitter and faster. Start to introduce some mixed-pace running (intervals) and try some sustained faster-paced running (tempo).

Weeks 9-12: Determine and practise your marathon race pace, complete your final long runs and understand your nutritional needs. Run a little faster in some interval workouts and stay mentally strong.

Weeks 13-16: Complete your build-up. Put the final touches to your training. Start to reduce your training volume with three weeks to go, stay healthy, injury free and be ready for race day feeling fresh and highly motivated.

THE BIG MILES

Your long runs really matter. They are the money miles that build your stamina. Focus first on increasing the time on your feet, rather than worrying about distance covered. What constitutes a long run depends on your level of fitness, phase of training programme and marathon aspirations. Long, slow runs are usually done at a controlled and manageable pace (perhaps 45 to 60 seconds slower per mile than your target marathon pace). As a general long-run rule, if you're out of breath, you're running too fast.

Your long run should progress in distance as your training plan builds. One long run a week is typically enough and your long run should build to a maximum distance of 20-22 miles by three weeks before race day.



MIX IT UP

As well as building your distance up in one of your weekly runs (your 'long run') you can also reap the rewards of your running, get fitter quicker and keep your running varied and motivational by changing the pace of the running that you do. Instead of doing all of your runs at the same pace, explore running faster on some runs. It might feel harder to begin with, but periods of faster running separated with periods of easier running or resting actually boosts your fitness more than another steady plod. Both 'intervals' and sustained 'tempo' running are great for marathon training.



✓ TOP TIP

Know your target race pace by calculating the 'pace per mile' you need to run to finish in your target time. For example, 9 minutes and 9 seconds per mile equates to a four-hour marathon.

■ 3 MUST-DO MARATHON SESSIONS

■ **Triple 6 long run.** 18 miles as a fast-finish long run. 6 miles at 60secs per mile slower than marathon pace; 6 miles at 30secs per mile slower than marathon pace; 6 miles at marathon pace.

■ **Sustained tempo run.** 10 minutes very easy running followed by 40 minutes of sustained effort at around 70% of maximum effort. Think of it as controlled discomfort.

■ **Marathon pace mile repeats.** These help to teach pace control. 10 minutes easy warm-up, followed by 5x1 mile at marathon pace with 2 minutes of very slow running between each mile.



OVER TO YOU

Do you have a question for Martin? Drop us an email at mensrunning@wildbunchmedia.co.uk

TONE DEF

Define your muscles and improve your core strength with our six-move circuit



SETS, REPS AND FREQUENCY

Do two to three sets of 15 repetitions.

1 LUNGE WITH A STRAIGHT-LEG GLUTE LIFT

Muscles: Thighs, bottom, hip flexors, core (quadriceps, hamstrings, glutes, PSOAS muscles, transversus abdominis)

Why do it?

Power up your leg strength.

Technique:

- Stand with one leg in front of the other
- Bend both knees to perform a lunge

- Push up to the standing position using your front leg
- Simultaneously lift your back leg off the floor, keeping it straight
- Place your back foot on the floor and return to the lunge
- Complete one set before changing over to the other side

Safety tip:

Keep your back straight and focus on one point in front of you for balance.



2 STABILITY BALL PRESS-UP

Muscles: Chest, arms, core muscles (pectorals, triceps, transversus abdominis, erector spinae)

Why do it?

A great exercise to improve your upper-body strength and your core stability.

Technique:

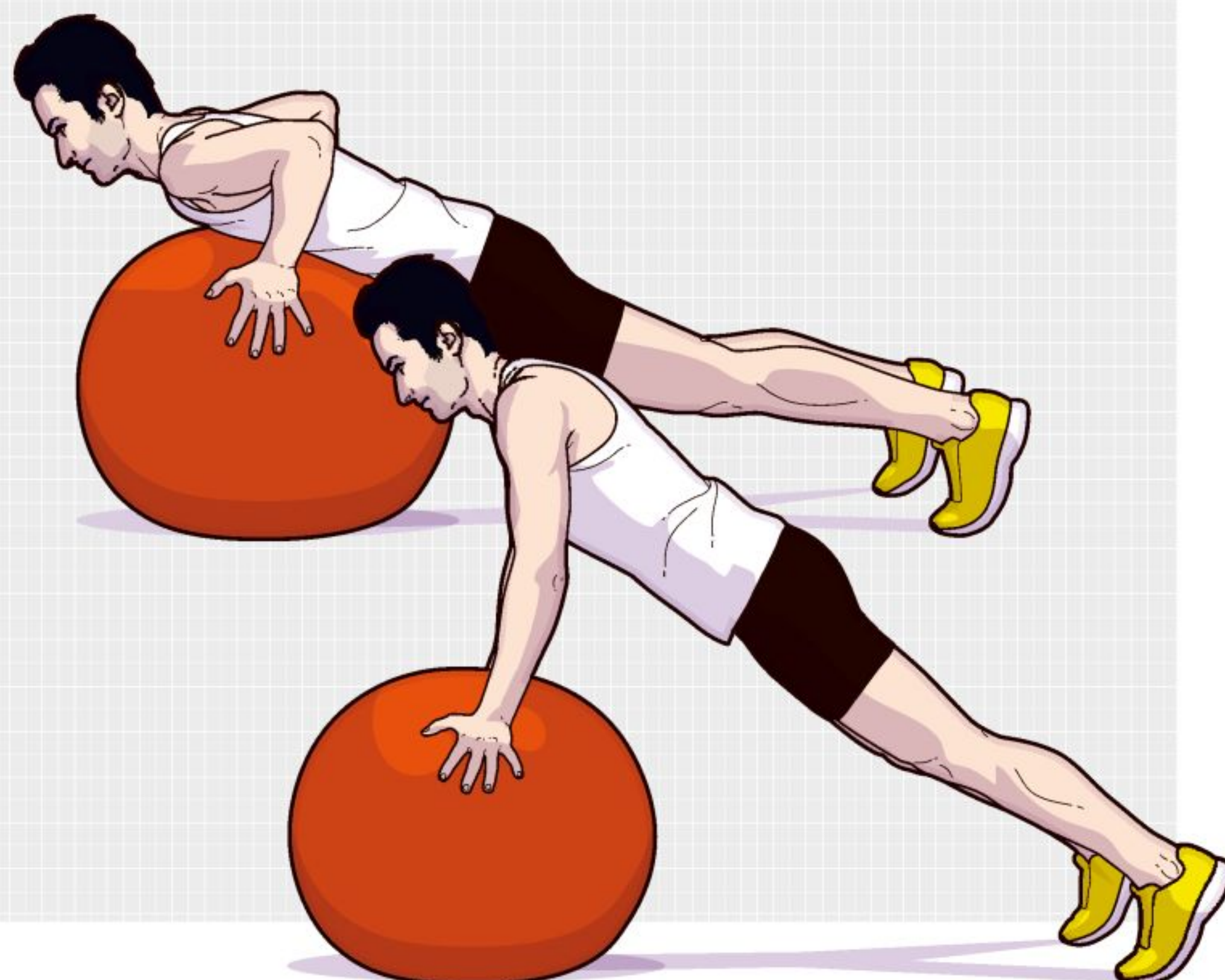
- Lie chest-first on a stability ball
- Place your hands on the ball, next

to your chest, with your fingers facing down

- Keep your feet slightly wider than hip-width apart
- Straighten your arms and lift your chest and hips off the ball
- Slowly lower with control

Safety tip:

If the ball wobbles a lot, place it against a wall for more stability.



3 STABILITY BALL CROSS-OVERS

Muscles: Stomach, side muscles (rectus abdominis, transversus abdominis, obliques)

Why do it?

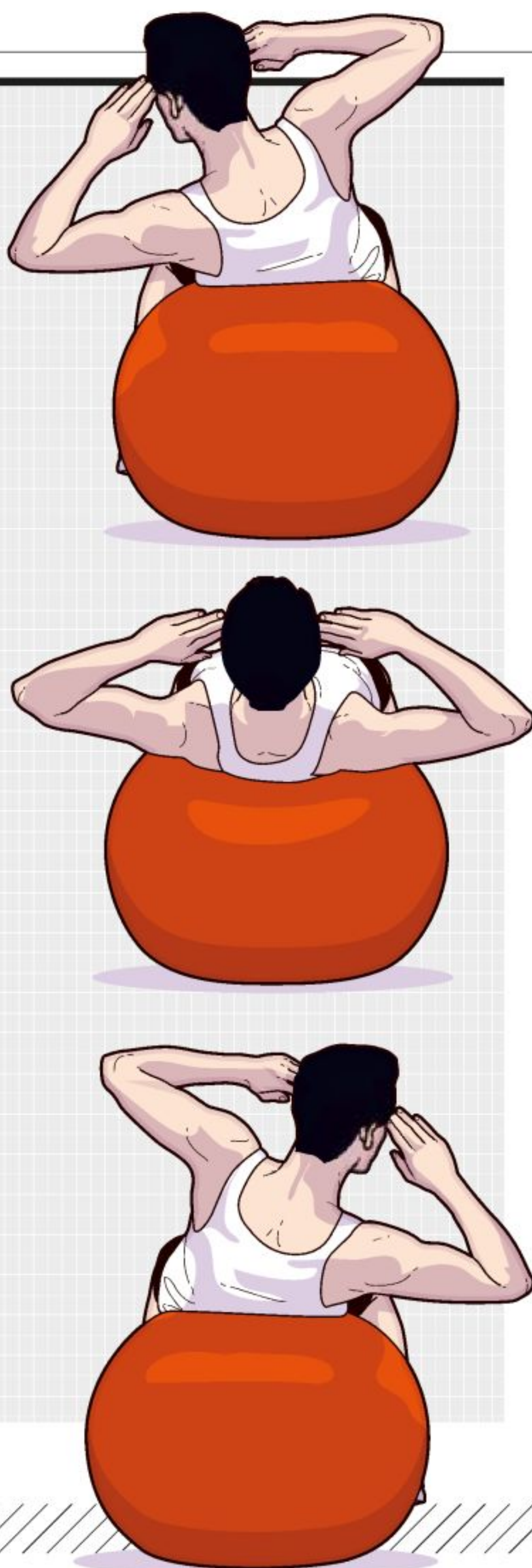
This is a great exercise to work your abdominals.

Technique:

- Lie with your lower back supported on a stability ball
- Keep your hands next to your ears
- Crunch up off the ball, twisting slightly towards the left
- Return to the centre position before repeating the crunch towards the right
- Alternate between left and right

Safety tip:

Keep the ball still throughout the movement.



4 STABILITY BALL BACK EXTENSION

Muscles: Back muscles (erector spinae)

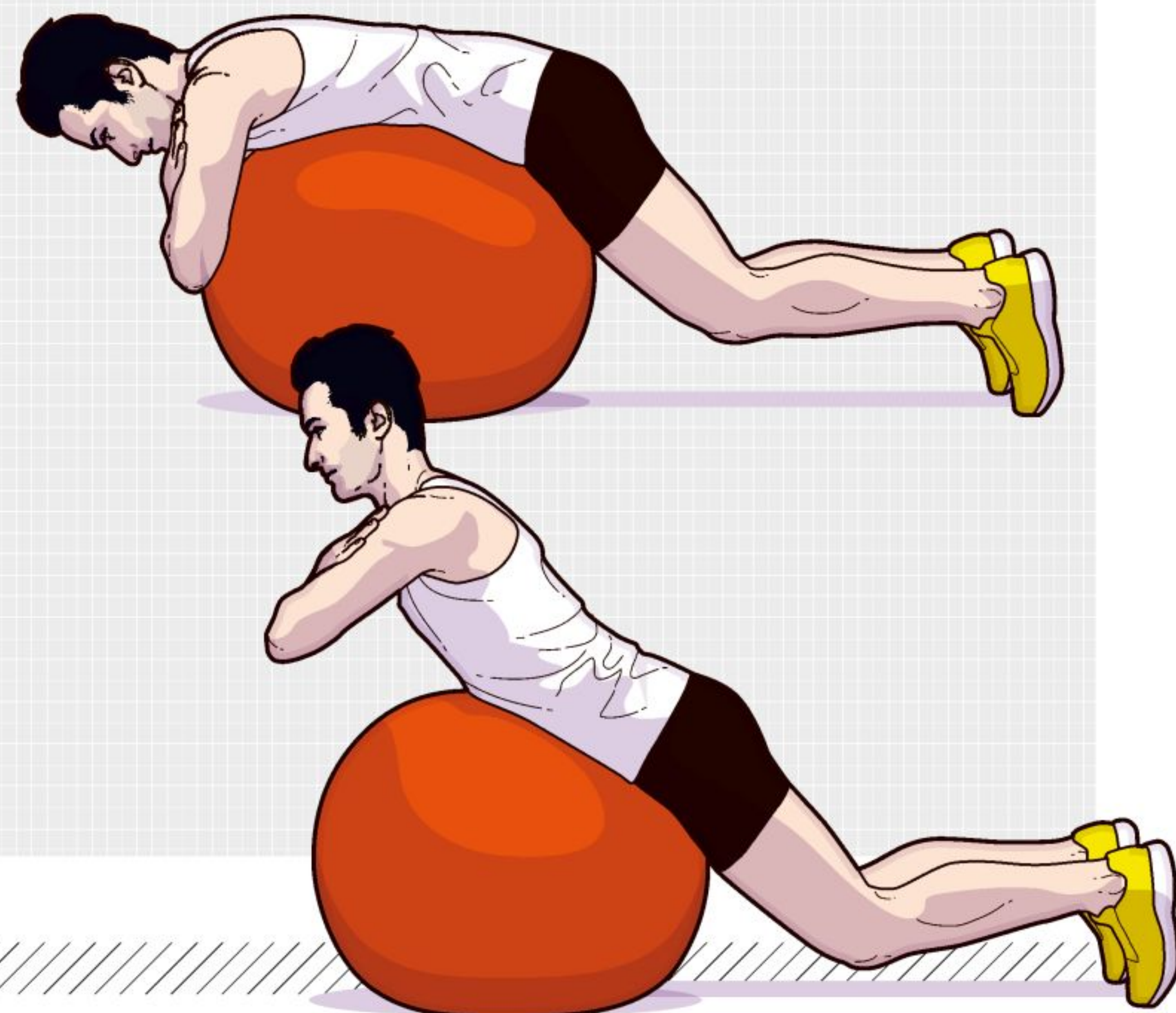
Why do it?

This is a great exercise to combat back pain.

Technique:

- Lie with your stomach on a stability ball
- Place your feet against a wall or secure object

- Cross your arms and place your hands on your shoulders
 - Lift your head and shoulders up until you form a straight line between your shoulders, hips and knees
 - Slowly lower with control
- Safety tip:**
Do not hyperextend (over-arch) your lower back.



5 STABILITY BALL SINGLE-LEG SPLIT SQUATS

Muscles: Thighs, bottom, hip flexors, core (quadriceps, hamstrings, glutes, PSOAS muscles, transversus abdominis)

Why do it?

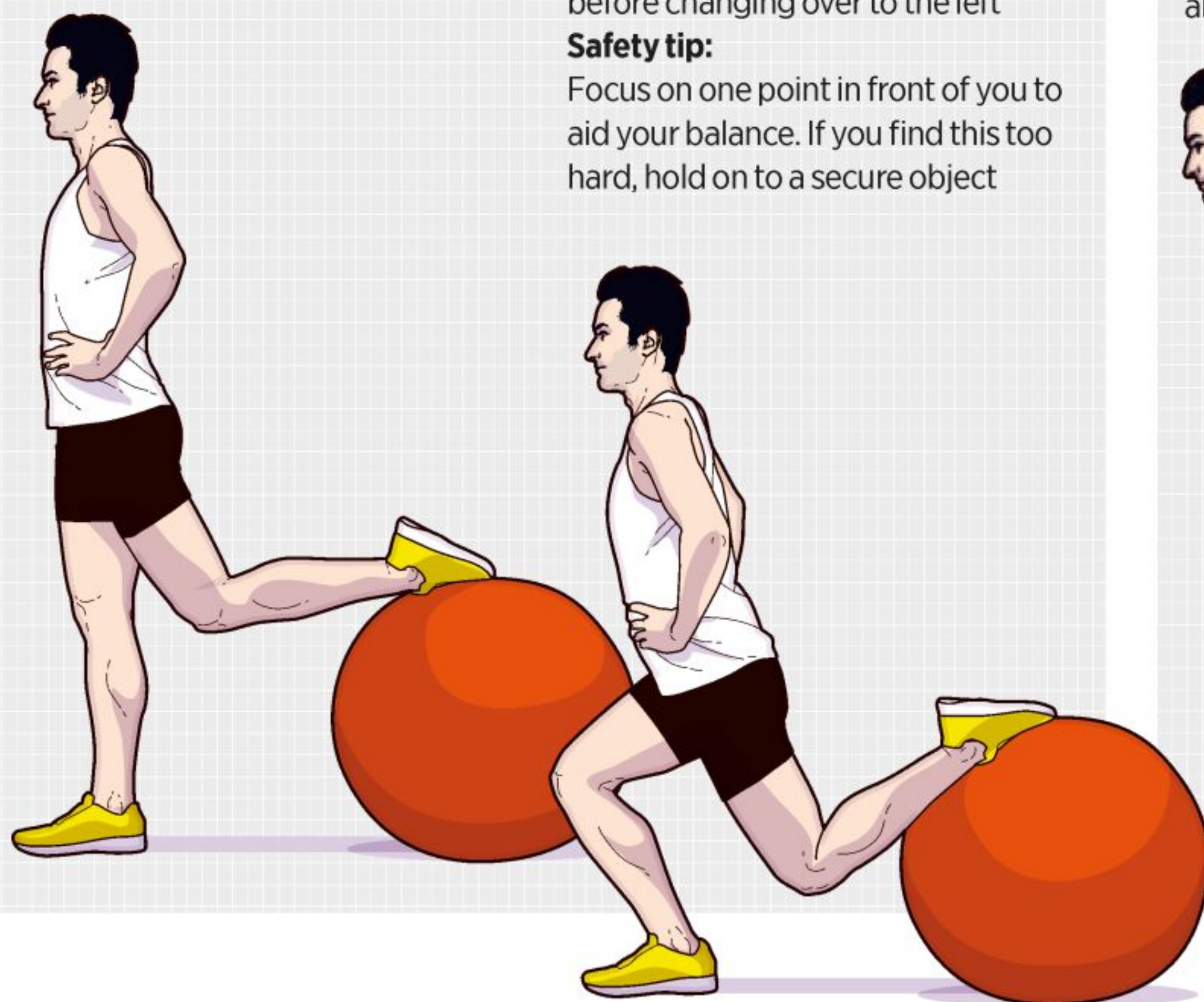
This is a great exercise to improve your leg strength and posture.

Technique:

- Stand on your right leg
- Place your left foot on a stability ball behind you
- Bend your standing leg to perform a squat
- Only bend your leg as much as you feel comfortable with
- Push up and straighten your leg back to the standing position
- Complete one set on the right before changing over to the left

Safety tip:

Focus on one point in front of you to aid your balance. If you find this too hard, hold on to a secure object



6 LEAP FROGS

Muscles: Thighs, stomach (quadriceps, hamstrings, rectus abdominis, transversus abdominis)

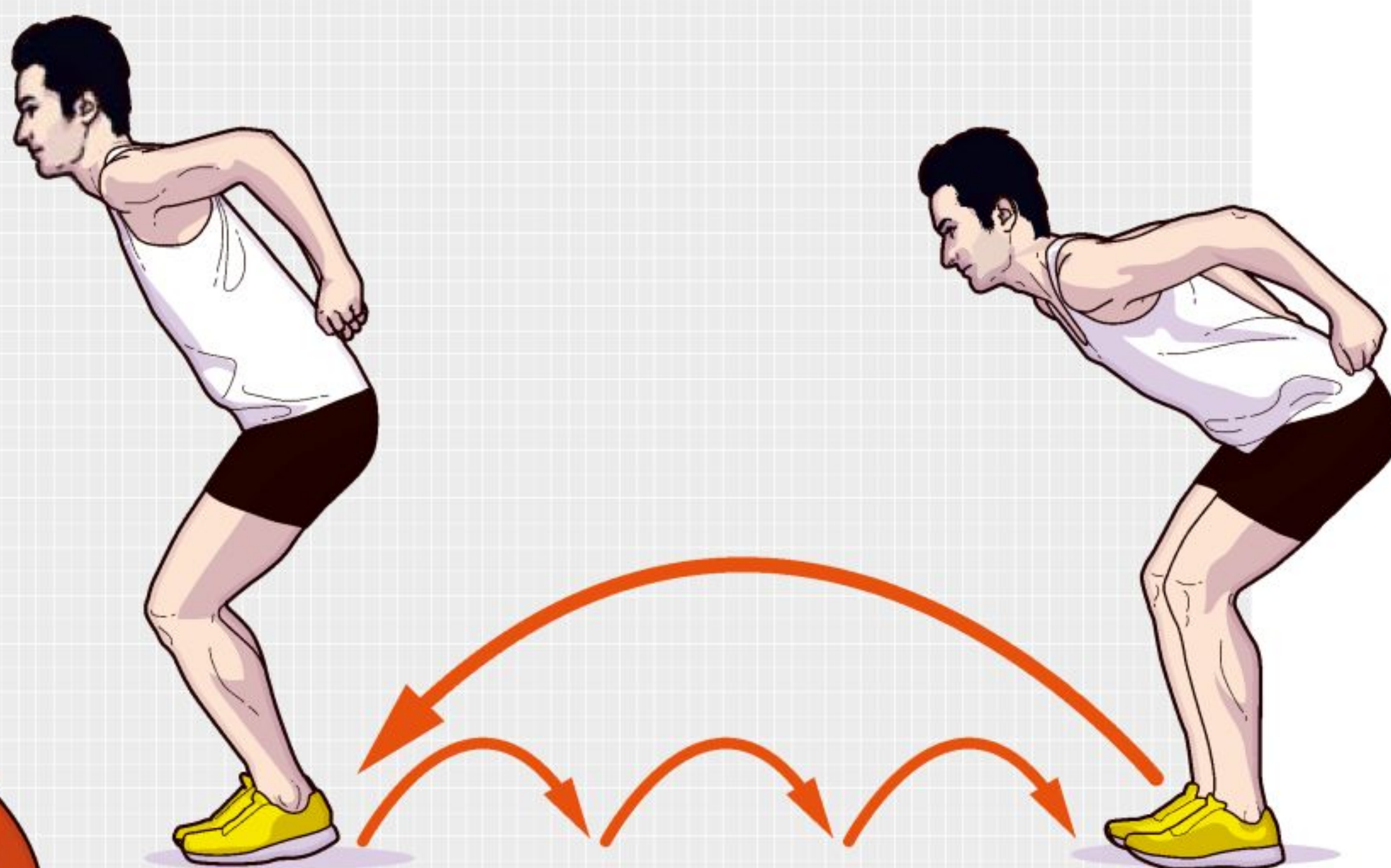
Why do it?

Jumping exercises are a great way to burn calories and tone your muscles.

Technique:

- Stand with feet hip-width apart
- Bend from your knees and hips and swing your arms backwards

- Jump forward as far as you can
 - Once landed, jump three times back to the starting position
- Safety tip:**
Keep your core muscles tight and use your arms for balance and momentum.



Run to Beat MS



Brendan Foster Photography

The MS Society is the leading national charity dedicated to beating MS. We fund research and fight for better treatment and care to help people take control of their lives.

Join us and become an MS Superstar.

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13 March 2016

Brighton
Marathon
17 April 2016

Great
Manchester Run
22 May 2016

Great
North Run
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**MEN'S
Running**

100



BEST RACES!



JANUARY TO JUNE 2016

Unmissable!

Looking for your next running challenge? Check out these top 100 must-do races from around the UK and overseas. From 5Ks to ultras, and everything in between, you won't want to miss these events...

5K

10K

**half-
marathon**

marathon

**overseas
marathon**

**obstacle/
ultra/fun**



THE LEICESTER CITY 5K WINTER SERIES

3 FEBRUARY 2016

This race takes place in Victoria Park, Leicester, and features multiple laps of the park. It's undulating, with frequent water stops and distance markers at every kilometre. It's a traffic-free course with supervised bag storage. All finishers receive a medal, prizes and goodies.

nice-work.org.uk

THE GRAVESEND FLOODLIT 5K

4 FEBRUARY 2016

An evening run, this event starts at 7pm in the Cyclopark in Graysend and is ideal for those wanting to push a bit harder and work on their speedwork during the winter months. The two-lap, floodlit race is part of a series of six.

nice-work.org.uk

RUN ETON DORNEY, ETON

6 FEBRUARY 2016

The Run Eton 5K race is the perfect winter training run. The route circles the 5K lake and offers flat and fast paths. With Windsor Castle visible in the background, and memories of Team GB's achievements lingering in the air, you'll feel inspired.

votwo.co.uk

RUN FOR CHOCOLATE 5K, READING

5 MARCH 2016

Chocolate lovers, this race is calling you! The emphasis is on fun for this event: you won't be timed so forget about that PB. Bring your friends and family along to cheer you on – they'll love the party atmosphere, live music and unlimited luxury hot chocolate.

runforchocolate.co.uk/reading

MILTON KEYNES FESTIVAL OF RUNNING 5K

6 MARCH 2016

This event starts at 10am at the Xscape Centre, Marlborough Gate, Milton Keynes, and is a one-lap course through town and rural settings. It is mostly flat, has frequent water stations, and distance-markers are located at every mile.

mkrun.co.uk

THE SUFFERING 5K MUD RUN, LEICESTERSHIRE

12 MARCH 2016

This 5K obstacle run through the idyllic grounds of Rockingham Castle is described as an 'entry-level race', but don't be fooled: it's tough. Great fun, though. So if you love a bit of mucky tomfoolery, this obstacle race is the one for you.

thesufferingrace.co.uk

INVERNESS 5K FUN RUN

13 MARCH 2016

This entry-level race is great for all types of runners, from experienced racers to children just starting out. The route heads towards Inverness city centre before crossing the River Ness, then heading under Ness Castle and alongside the river.

invernesshalfmarathon.co.uk

THE BRIGHTON CHICKEN RUN 5K

20 MARCH 2016

Do something eggs-traordinary on the Easter weekend and take on this fun-run round Hove Park. It's a real family affair with options for a one-mile chicken run and a 500m chicks dash. All entrants will receive a chicken costume and chocolate egg!

brightonandhovechick.wix.com/brightonchickenrun

HEROES RUN BRIGHTON 5K

15 MAY 2016 - TBC

Entrants sign up for the event, and then decide to run as either a hero or a villain. On race day, participants then face off ready for battle (or running, in this case) along the seafront. So, mask or cape? You decide!

heroesrun.org.uk



Eat Chia & RUN

Why eat chia?

Chia has been revered for centuries by Central America's Tarahumara Indians who would run all day on the energy of chia seeds mixed with water and lemon juice.

Chia is the perfect running food as it is rich in fibre, protein, omega 3 and antioxidants. Chia holds 16 times its weight in water, prolonging hydration in distance events. The rich fibre content slows the conversion of carbohydrate to sugar and provides a sustained release of energy. The omega 3

in chia promotes a healthy heart and lean muscle mass for strength. Chia's complete protein helps with cell and tissue regeneration and the antioxidants fight free radicals that attack our immune system.

As a runner it can be difficult to fit in the daily energy requirements needed to fuel, hydrate and then refuel the body. A well balanced eating plan which incorporates nutrient rich chia seeds will make a positive impact on your overall health and running performance.

Why The Chia Co chia?

We farm chia ourselves sustainably, in the perfect environment. Our chia grows with the ideal climate, soil and water, and is sun ripened to produce seeds of the highest nutritional quality.

Eat chia, every day

Whether you're a professional marathon runner, a weekend warrior, or a parent running around after your kids, eat 15g of chia everyday for sustained energy. Visit thechiaco.com for more recipes and products by The Chia Co.

Chia Omelette with Feta and Spinach

Gluten Free

Prep time: 5 min

Serves: 1

You'll Need

2 eggs
40ml cup low-fat milk
1tsp chia seeds
Cracked black pepper

1tsp olive oil
25g feta cheese, crumbed
½ cup baby spinach

Method

Beat the eggs together with milk, chia seeds and black pepper. Set the mixture aside for about 10 minutes. Heat a small non stick omelette pan with olive oil and pour the mixture into the pan. Tilt the pan around to ensure egg mixture completely covers the pan and cook over a medium heat until the omelette is almost cooked. Crumble the feta over the surface with the spinach and continue to cook until the spinach has slightly wilted. Fold omelette in half and serve.

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ENDURANCELIFE COASTAL TRAIL SERIES DOVER

16 JANUARY 2016

The Coastal Trail Series is truly incredible. Whether the race is in Suffolk or Northumberland, 44 miles in length or 10K – it's bound to be special. This race sees runners take on a wonderful course situated near the iconic White Cliffs tower. The coastal path, which skims the Kent Downs, makes for a fantastic route, and for one of the most challenging but exciting on the series.

endurancelife.com



VICTORIA PARK 10K, LONDON

24 JANUARY 2016

Held in London's oldest park, this race is fast, flat and perfect if you're after a PB. It's also suitable for runners of all abilities. Alternatively, take it slow and enjoy the beautiful and historic setting, which is on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest.

theraceorganiser.com/victoria-park-10k.html

MAD DOG 10K, SOUTHPORT

7 FEB 2016

Some like to dress up; others like to take it seriously. Either way, this 10K is one of the best around. Taking place along the Southport shoreline, this race is fast and flat and is perfect for anyone looking to run a quick time. It's also a great event for fun runners, and those who dress up really do add to the fantastic race-day atmosphere. The course can get quite narrow at times, however, and the wind can prove tricky, but it's all part of the fun. You'd be barking mad to miss it.

maddog10k.co.uk

QUEEN ELIZABETH OLYMPIC PARK 10K RUN, LONDON

13 FEBRUARY 2016

This new park is situated at the heart of east London and was called Olympic Park before it was renamed to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. The race is a 10K jog through the park to raise funds for the British Heart Foundation, while taking in the impressive, world-famous London 2012 Olympic village. There's also a 5K option if you prefer. So follow in the footsteps of running's greats and sign up today.

bhf.org.uk

WHERE'S WALLY? FUN RUN, LONDON

20 MARCH 2016

This race is back; bigger and better than ever, taking place in Clapham Common for the first time. Fancy dress is a must for this fun run, although despite its name you won't be hard to spot. It's a real family affair with 10K, 5K and 1K options available. All adults are asked to fundraise £100 to help the National Literacy Trust support those in need.

literacytrust.org.uk/support/fundraising_and_events/fun_run

THE GLENLIVET 10K, BANFFSHIRE

10 APRIL 2016

This race takes place in the stunning Glenlivet Estate in the Cairngorms National Park, giving it the title of the 'most beautiful run in Scotland' according to some critics. The start and finish of the event are based at the Glenlivet Distillery and every runner will receive a special event memento, a 'wee dram' and a goody bag. What's more, all funds raised will go to the Scottish Charity Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland. The race has raised over £100,000 for the charity over the last seven years.

chss.org.uk/supportus/fundraise-for-us/events/glenlivet-10k/

CITY OF LINCOLN 10K

17 APRIL 2016

The City of Lincoln 10K, which is a part of the Run For All 10K Series, is as good a race as you'll come across. The event is run by the Asda Foundation, and is a fantastic occasion for both runners and spectators. Full of character, the location fits the bill in terms of scenery and atmosphere, making the day a lively and entertaining occasion. The course is pretty flat, too.

runforall.com



Spire Sussex Hospital

Bartletts 

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- Free quality programme, free parking.
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Enter now by going to our website:

www.hastings-half.co.uk

"To celebrate the 950th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings in 1066, runners are encouraged to dress in 1066 costume"



CONTI LIGHTNING RUN 12HR 10K, WALTON-UPON-TRENT

1 MAY 2016

Taking place in Walton-upon-Trent's Catton Park, this event requires you to run as many times as you can around the 10K off-road course. Runners have 12 hours to tally up as many laps as possible, and can run it solo or as part of a team – with participants switching after every lap. This race is the ultimate test of strength and endurance – and, for those running in groups, tactics and teamwork.

contilightningrun.co.uk



I RACED IT!

Conti Lightning Run

"Running is a solitary affair, but the team concept of the Conti Lightning Run allows the athlete to momentarily escape the loneliness of the long-distance runner. Not only that, the race reminded me why I run: for the sake of putting one leg in front of the other and seeing where they take me."

Jonny Muir, Edinburgh

RUN BRISTOL 10K

MAY 2016 - TBC

Fancy beating your personal best? If so, the Run Bristol 10K might be for you. The race starts and finishes in Bristol's historic Harbourside, taking runners on a fast point-to-point loop. The scenic route takes in Brunel's Clifton Suspension Bridge.

runbristol.com

BUPA GREAT MANCHESTER RUN

22 MAY 2016

Televised live on the BBC, Europe's leading 10K starts and finishes in Manchester city centre. It includes a 'run-through' shower and a few 'Bands on the Run' throughout the course, so there's no need to worry about a lack of refreshment or music on the day.

greatrun.org

BUPA LONDON 10,000, LONDON

30 MAY 2016

Starting and finishing in St James's Park, this 10K takes in all of London's main attractions. The race has runners pass the London Eye, Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament among others on their way to the finish line.

london10000.co.uk

CHELTENHAM CHALLENGE

19 JUNE 2016

This off-road event for runners offers a scenic course on the sections of the Cheltenham Circular Footpath, Cotswold Way and Winchcombe Way. This annual event, which aims to raise money for various charities, starts and ends at Cheltenham Racecourse.

cheltenhamchallenge.org.uk

■ HALF-MARATHON

STAR WARS HALF MARATHON, CALIFORNIA, USA

14-17 JANUARY

Use the force to propel yourself across the finish line at this *Star Wars*-themed race. There's events for the kids and races of various distances so everyone can join the fun and no one gets left out on the Dark Side – unless, of course, that's what you want!

rundisney.com/star-wars-half-marathon

BRIGHTON HALF MARATHON

28 FEBRUARY 2016

Organised by the charity Sussex Beacon, this is one of UK's most popular races. Starting on Madeira Drive – situated on the seafront – runners head north past the Brighton Pavilion before turning back towards the coast, and ultimately the start point. The course is fun and enjoyable, and the atmosphere is good!

brightonhalfmarathon.com

I RACED IT!

Brighton Half Marathon

"There's wonderful support throughout this mainly fast course, which features only one small hill – and even then you get the benefit of running down it on the way back. PB potential, provided it's not too windy!"

Andrew Haslam, Brighton

THE SEMI-MARATHON DE PARIS, FRANCE

6 MARCH 2016

It may be one of the world's trendiest cities, but it's time to swap the haute couture for trainers to take on the Paris Half Marathon. The race, which is in its 24th year, takes you past all of the tourist hotspots and it's a good bet for anyone chasing a PB.

semideparis.com/us



www.abpsouthamptonhalfmarathon.co.uk



THE BROOKS FLEET HALF MARATHON

20 MARCH 2016

Now in its 34th year, this is one of the longest-running half-marathons in the UK. Extremely popular around Fleet and its surrounding towns, the race uses a flat course and takes runners across a mix of urban and rural roads. The event is perfect for those planning to run April's London Marathon, and a few thousand participants are expected to again turn up on the day. This is a well organised and friendly event, so give it a go!

fleethalfmarathon.com

I RACED IT!

Brooks Fleet Half Marathon

"A perfect warm-up race for a spring-time marathon. A relatively flat two-lap course means that there is a encouraging crowd that helps produce a good atmosphere."

Chris Spratt, former Project 26.2 runner, Reading

MILTON KEYNES HALF MARATHON

6 MARCH 2016

Taking place under the Festival of Running, this race is a real treat. Starting on the central dual-carriageways of Milton Keynes, runners then get to enjoy a beautifully scenic and winding run towards the finish. The half-marathon, given the date of the race, is ideal for those wanting to train towards the London Marathon. But it's also aimed towards new and fun runners, so there's no reason to hold back!

mkhalf.co.uk

GLOBAL ENERGY INVERNESS HALF MARATHON

13 MARCH 2016

A huge turnout of 3,400 runners took part in the half-marathon this year, and it's expected to be just as popular next year, too. The race starts along the banks of the River Ness, following the river it then continues under the impressive outline of Inverness Castle before finishing at the city's Queens Park Stadium.

invernesshalfmarathon.co.uk

BATH HALF MARATHON

13 MARCH 2016

This 'Big City' race is a real cracker. Starting and finishing at Great Pulteney Street, runners tackle two loops of a fast and flat course. Including both sides of the river Avon, it lead through the centre of the historic city on a route that's been unchanged since 2006.

bathhalf.co.uk

ADIDAS SILVERSTONE HALF MARATHON, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

13 MARCH 2016

The motor racing circuit plays host to this fantastic race, which is a

suitable choice for both novice and experienced runners. Whether you're aiming for a quick time, to run your first half-marathon or to ready yourself for the London Marathon, this one's for you.

adidashalfmarathon.co.uk

VITALITY LIVERPOOL HALF MARATHON

13 MARCH 2016

The race starts and finishes around the Pier Head area, with the predominately fast and flat course meaning a PB is very achievable. The only incline comes after the one-mile mark, when runners make their way along Upper Parliament Street. The final stretch along the prom can also be quite windy, so save yourself for the end!

runliverpool.org.uk

VITALITY NORTH LONDON HALF MARATHON

20 MARCH 2016

The race starts at Saracens rugby club's Allianz Park, and takes runners through the streets of north London, and then on to Wembley Stadium. Here, a length of England's iconic ground will be covered before then heading back to a packed Allianz Park.

northlondonhalf.com

THE HASTINGS HALF MARATHON

20 MARCH 2016

The course circumnavigates the ancient town of Hastings, starting at the seafront and following the route of William the Conqueror towards Battle, round the back of the town and down to the famous 'Old Town' and fishing village of Hastings. Although the first half is tough, the second half is largely downhill.

hastings-half.co.uk



09.10.2016

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theyorkshiremarathon.com



GOZO HALF MARATHON, MALTA

24 APRIL 2016

If you fancy a half-marathon overseas, then try this event on the Maltese island of Gozo. The island is full of rustic, rural charm, which you won't find on Malta. Last year, 420 runners turned out for the event, which is approaching its 40th anniversary, so it's ideal if you're not a fan of big crowds.

gozomarathon.org

I RACED IT!

Gozo Half Marathon

"Boasting 300 days of sun a year, the island of Gozo is a great location for a spring half-marathon. It certainly isn't flat – the hill at the end is a brute – but the scenery is stunning and the atmosphere welcoming. Just be sure to pack some sun cream and do some hill work in preparation for it."

Rick Pearson, MR Managing Editor



WARWICK HALF MARATHON

3 APRIL 2016

Organised by the British Heart Foundation, this race is both good fun and in aid of a great cause. The half-marathon starts and finishes at Warwick Racecourse, following an undulating route through the town and its beautiful countryside.

bhf.org.uk

VITALITY READING HALF MARATHON

3 APRIL 2016

The fast a flat course begins at Green Park and then heads through the town centre of Reading. Runners then make their way through the stunning grounds of the University campus before finish inside the Majeski Stadium. The course can be ran quickly, but it is also a great choice for new and leisurely runners.

readinghalfmarathon.com

ABP SOUTHAMPTON HALF

24 APRIL 2016

Starting at Hoglands Park this is a fairly flat route, so a PB is certainly not out of the question and you can expect some spectacular views over the river and out to sea towards the Isle of Wight.

abpsouthamptonhalf.co.uk

CAMBRIDGE HALF MARATHON

28 MARCH 2016

Events don't get much better than the Cambridge Half Marathon. Beginning on Victoria Avenue and ending on Midsummer Common, the race passes some of the city's most iconic locations, including Market Square and the Round Church. The route takes

runners on two laps of the town and surrounding countryside. The roads are pretty flat, too, which makes for a great run!

onestepbeyond.org.uk

SIGLION SUNDERLAND HALF MARATHON

1 MAY 2016

After five years based at the Stadium of Light, the Sunderland Half Marathon (and the Sunderland City 10K) has a new home at Keel Square, a symbol of the city's renewal and regeneration. Although this takes the race closer to the city centre, most of the city's most iconic landmarks will remain on the route.

sunderlandcity10k.com/sunderland-city-half-marathon

VITALITY RUN HACKNEY HALF MARATHON, LONDON

8 MAY 2016

Want to get a new PB? Then this fast and flat race through Hackney and the iconic Queen Elizabeth Royal Park is for you. Enthusiastic spectators and live entertainment lend a carnival atmosphere to the event, lifting you over the finish line. If you don't fancy taking on the full 10K, there is also a 5K option.

runhackney.com

HENLEY HALF MARATHON TRAIL RUN, OXFORDSHIRE

8 MAY 2016

If you're not a local then this is a great opportunity to visit the beautiful Henley-on-Thames. The trail run starts and finishes at Temple Island Meadows, the official start line for the Royal Henley Regatta. There's a 10K option too – but the cut-off time for the half-marathon is 3hrs 30mins, making it achievable if you'd like to mix running and walking.

f3events.co.uk

The background of the top poster is a scenic view of a coastal town, likely Torquay, with a large Ferris wheel visible on the left and a blue sea in the foreground. A large, glowing orange sun is positioned behind the silhouettes of several runners in various stages of a running stride.

torbay

HALF MARATHON JUNE 26TH 2016

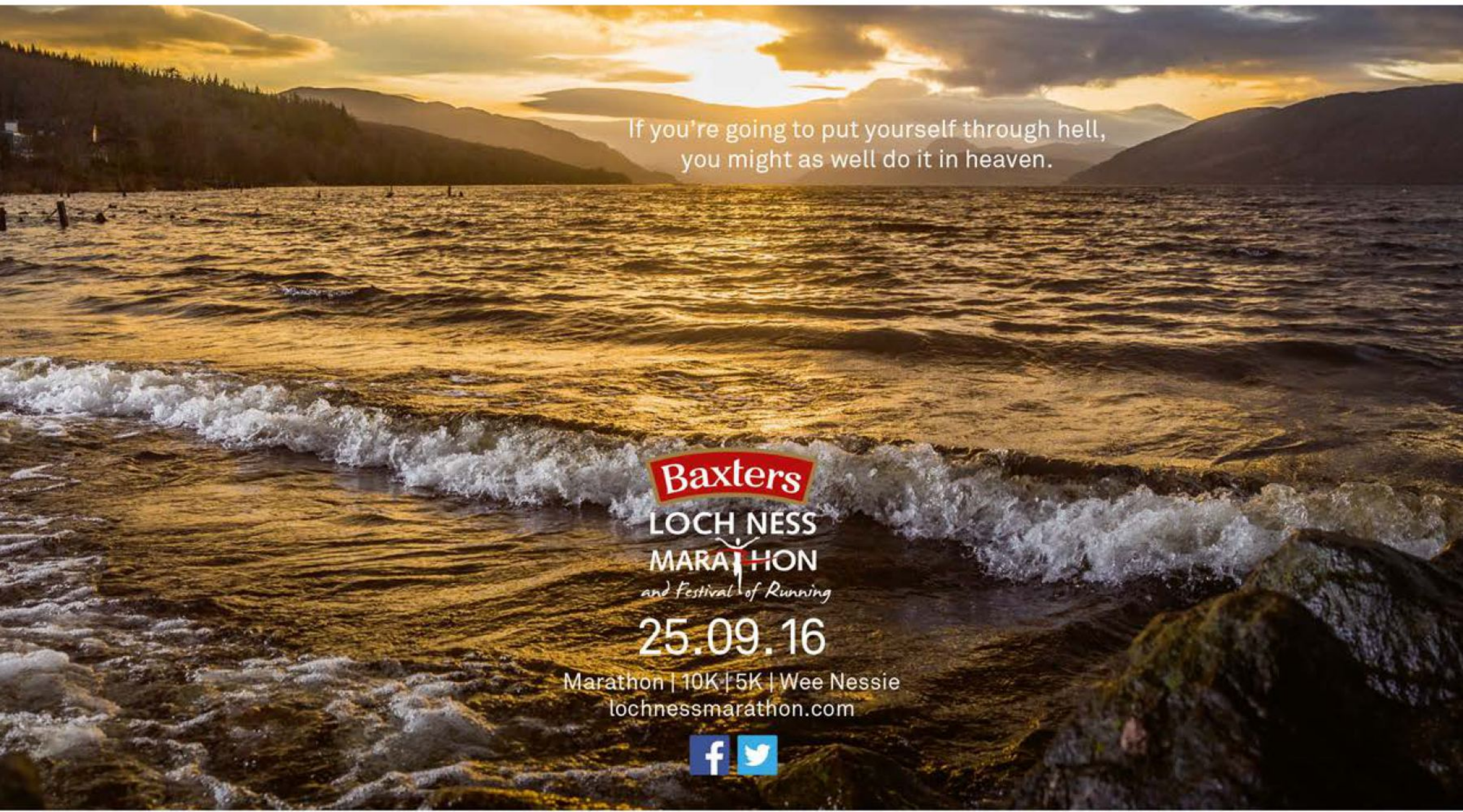
9:00am start from Paignton Seafront on The English Riviera

Enjoy the stunning coastal views across Torbay

Traffic Free Course

Tec T-Shirt, Medal, Goody Bag for all finishers

www.torbayhalfmarathon.co.uk

The background of the bottom poster is a dramatic landscape of Loch Ness at sunset or sunrise. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a golden glow over the water and the surrounding mountains. Waves are breaking in the foreground.

If you're going to put yourself through hell,
you might as well do it in heaven.

Baxters

LOCH NESS
MARATHON
and Festival of Running

25.09.16

Marathon | 10K | 5K | Wee Nessie
lochnessmarathon.com





PLUSNET RUN FOR ALL LEEDS HALF MARATHON

8 MAY 2016

This highly-rated race is bursting with life – and people. As one of the largest annual sporting events in Leeds, Yorkshire's biggest hospice run raises money for a number of local and national charities. The race starts on The Headrow and finishes in Cookridge Street – to the side of landmark Millennium Square – taking in the city centre and suburbs. So join the fun, and enter this brilliant event!

runforall.com



MBNA CHESTER HALF MARATHON

15 MAY 2016

Chester is full of character, and this race is no different. Starting at Chester Racecourse, the route runs north-west out of the city before turning back and finishing outside of the Town Hall and cathedral. Runners get to travel across some (much-welcomed) wide roads, and the course is fast and relatively flat.

ale.niftyentries.com/chesterhalfmarathon

SNOWDONIA HALF MARATHON

22 MAY 2016

Snowdonia National Park is a runner's paradise. Deep forests, rocky mountains and cascading rivers accompany participants on their way to the finish of this race. But beware: the surroundings make for an incredibly tough and gruelling race. Are you up to it?

runwales.com

ROYAL WINDSOR HALF MARATHON RIVER TRAIL RUN

22 MAY 2016

Experience the historic Thames Valley with this fantastic race, which starts and finishes at the foot of Windsor Castle. Follow trail paths along the banks of the River Thames, passing key landmarks which make Royal Berkshire so special. There's a 10K option, too.

f3events.co.uk

EMF EDINBURGH HALF MARATHON

29 MAY 2016

Following the fast Edinburgh Marathon route, this half-marathon is just as quick. The course is flat so makes for great first-time racing, and it's also ideal for those seeking a PB.

edinburgh-marathon.com

SOUTH DOWNS HALF MARATHON, SUSSEX

18 JUNE 2016

This trail race sets the tone early on, so don't expect an easy ride. The start of the half-marathon sees runners tackle a one-mile climb up the South Downs Way to the radio mast at the top of Butser Hill. Hilly and testing, this is a real off-road challenge.

209events.com

SALOMON TRAIL HALF MARATHON WALES, SNOWDONIA

18 JUNE 2016

Wales' Coed y Brenin forest, located in Snowdonia National Park, is a place of amazing beauty. So, as you might well imagine, running within its surroundings is pretty rewarding. The half-marathon race lets you do just that, on fully marked trail single track as well as forest roads and paths.

trailmarathonwales.com

TORBAY HALF MARATHON, DEVON

26 JUNE 2016

This half marathon in Torbay is a great choice for all you seaside lovers. The Devon location plays the perfect host to this coastal classic, now in its 24th year.

torbayhalfmarathon.co.uk

JCP SWANSEA HALF MARATHON

26 JUNE 2016

This race takes in all the sights of Swansea – from the historic Swansea Castle, to stunning views over Swansea Bay. As you head towards the Meridian Tower, the fast and flat promenade onto Swansea Marina is perfect for a PB.

swanseahalfmarathon.co.uk



CHELTENHAM CHALLENGE

Sunday 19th June 2016

#BeThere

www.cheltenhamchallenge.org.uk

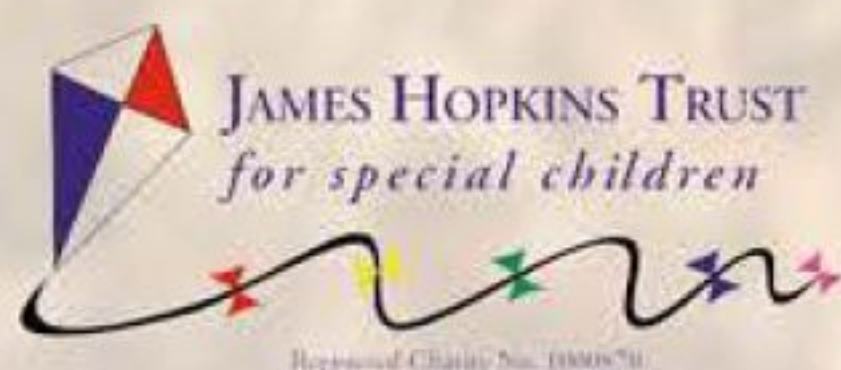
Cheltenham's festival of running, starting and finishing from the iconic Cheltenham Racecourse, is an exhilarating multi terrain event set in stunning Cotswold countryside.



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Event organised by County Community Projects Reg. Charity No. 1043143

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ASICS GREATER MANCHESTER MARATHON

10 APRIL 2016

The Greater Manchester Marathon is a real cracker. Held in Trafford, the Asics sponsored event gives runners the chance to partake in a fast and flat race. The occasion is extremely lively, and participants will be buoyed by the great support and extra entertainment offered on the day. The course makes its way around the area's streets before finally finishing at Manchester United's spectacular Old Trafford stadium.

greatermanchestermarathon.com



STEYNING STINGER MARATHON, SUSSEX

6 MARCH 2016

This isn't called the 'Stinger' for nothing. Taking place on the South Downs, between Worthing and Shoreham-by-Sea, the race simply heads up towards the top of the Downs. Best described as a cross-country hill run, it's a real test of physical and mental toughness. The course covers countryside, roads and four hills (also known as 'Stings'). So hold on tight, as this is one tricky ride!

steyningac.co.uk

NORTHAMPTON RUNNING FESTIVAL MARATHON

3 APRIL 2016

This country park race is set in the picturesque grounds of Delapre Abbey, a location perfect for a marathon run. The Delapre Lake, alongside the historic 14th century building, adds to the charm of the race – which sells itself on the beauty of the surroundings. Runners follow a 3.5K-loop that is made up of open grassland, trails and a section of lakeside running. Suitable for the novice and experienced racer alike.

gobeyondsport.co.uk

PLUSNET YORKSHIRE MARATHON, YORK

10 APRIL 2016

History buffs will enjoy this scenic race which starts and finishes at the University of York. You'll wind your way through the quaint city centre before you head out into the countryside and back again, turning at Stamford Bridge. It's Yorkshire's biggest marathon, and a popular event, so register fast to secure your place.

theyorkshiremarathon.com

BRIGHTON MARATHON

17 APRIL 2016

This is one of the UK's most popular events and a must-do for runners in the South East. Renowned for its lively and exciting atmosphere, the event seems to grow bigger and better year on year. Weaving through the streets of Brighton, the race continues alongside the bright blue of the ocean before finally ending on the city's magnificent seafront. This picture-perfect marathon boasts a support and feel like few others – and it's a great place for a few post-race beverages.

brightonmarathon.com

GREAT WELSH MARATHON, LLANELLI

17 APRIL 2016

Over 60% of those who have taken part in this event have come away with a personal best. That's a pretty impressive statistic, isn't it? Well, it comes as no surprise given the race's incredibly flat and fast course. The traffic-free route takes runners in and around Llanelli's Millennium Coastal Park. This scenic run is a real treat, so don't miss out!

greatwelshmarathon.org

BLACKPOOL MARATHON

24 APRIL 2016

This fun event is a great day out for friends and family. The marathon is joined by 10K and half-marathon distance races, so there's something for runners of all abilities and experiences. The longest race follows a two-lap course over fast and flat tarmac terrain, making for a quick run. So, those PB chasers out there have a real chance of notching a speedy time!

fyldecoastrunning.org



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SET YOUR SIGHTS ON A PB FOR 2016 WITH A FAST AND FLAT
SPRING HALF MARATHON IN THE NORTH EAST



VIRGIN MONEY LONDON MARATHON

24 APRIL 2016

The London Marathon is one of the world's showcase running events, drawing in world-class athletes, regular racers and fun-runners. First held in 1981, the race has since catapulted in size but tends to follow a similar route. The course is relatively flat and fast and runners are taken from Blackheath through to Buckingham Palace. This iconic race is extremely popular, so if you're lucky enough to bag a place in it, make the most of it!

virginmoneylondonmarathon.com

I RACED IT!

Virgin Money London Marathon

"What can you say about the London Marathon? It's quite simply one of the greatest races on the planet, thanks in no small part to the overwhelming support from the crowd. Everyone should run it at least once in their lifetime."

Rick Pearson, MR managing editor

ROTARY SHAKESPEARE MARATHON, STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

24 APRIL 2016

Starting and finishing in Stratford-upon-Avon, this race takes runners on a two-lap course through the town and it's surrounding countryside. The route is pretty flat and mainly covers road or gritty terrain. The event donates over 60% of your entree fee to charity, and prides itself on being run by volunteers and only having a few sponsors. So, help out a little and enjoy a fun and friendly race in the process.

shakespearemarathon.org.uk

MILTON KEYNES MARATHON

2 MAY 2016

The Milton Keynes Marathon has a total elevation of just 315 feet, so ready that stopwatch. The race takes place on a traffic-free course, on closed roads and cycles paths, so the potential is there for a quick time. The route sees participants complete one single loop, on scenic lake and canal-side ground as well as through the leafy city centre. Starting and finishing inside the MK Dons stadium, this is a must-run race.

mkmarathon.co.uk

DEEP RIVER ROCK BELFAST CITY MARATHON

2 MAY 2016

Most of the course is reasonably flat, but expect a few hills through miles nine to 14. Asics are official partners for the event and will be offering training advice to all runners via MY ASICS; a free online service to help you achieve your running goals. Expect amazing support from the crowd, too – and there's a fun-run option so the whole family can join in the bank holiday fun.

belfastcitymarathon.com

HALSTEAD AND ESSEX MARATHON

8 MAY 2016

North Essex isn't best known for its natural beauty. But the scenic location does actually make for a great race setting, the type perfect for a marathon. This run, although mainly taking place on roads, makes use of the area's rolling hills, forests and quiet back roads. It attracts runners from far and wide, with some in the past making the journey all the way from Dubai just to compete.

Smooth running and well organised, this pretty race is great fun.

halsteadroadrunners.org.uk

BRATHAY WINDERMERE MARATHON

22 MAY 2016

This marathon takes place in the heart of the Lake District, so is a real favourite among many. Starting and finishing at Brathay Hall in Clappersgate, the stunning race follows an anti-clockwise route around Lake Windermere. Runners are taken through Hawkshead, Newby Bridge, Bowness-on-Windermere and Ambleside. A scenic event that's certainly one for the calendar.

brathaywindemeremarathon.org.uk

RICHMOND PARK MARATHON, LONDON

22 MAY 2016

If you're looking for a race with fantastic scenery, this is for you. The marathon takes place in Richmond Park, the largest of London's Royal Parks. The beautiful location is the capital's biggest enclosed space, so makes the perfect place for a long-distance race. The course is made up of three laps of the park, with the first being longer in length than the last two. The route is not the easiest, but the setting makes for a great occasion.

richmondparkmarathon.co.uk



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Sport Relief is an initiative of Comic Relief, registered charity 326568 (England/Wales); SC039730 (Scotland). Photo credit: Adam Hinton.

Sainsbury's

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EDINBURGH MARATHON

29 MAY 2016

Now officially the fastest marathon in the UK, you won't want to miss this one. The Edinburgh race, now in its 13th year, is the largest of its kind in Scotland. The course is fast and flat and has an elevation drop of almost 40 metres, perfect for achieving a personal best. Over 70% of participants enter from outside of Scotland, making this event a real global occasion. Don't miss out!

edinburgh-marathon.com



I RACED IT!

Edinburgh Marathon

"A flat, fast race, Edinburgh Marathon is a great option for the PB-chasers among you. Just make sure you put in the miles in training. I didn't, and the last hour or so was torture!"

David Castle, MR editorial director

ROCK 'N' ROLL LIVERPOOL MARATHON

29 MAY 2016

Love music? This is the marathon for you. This lively event has bands playing round the course to spur you on, a fantastic atmosphere and lots of runners in fancy dress. At the end, you'll receive a blingy medal and more food than you can carry.

uk.competitor.com

BOLTON HILL MARATHON

JUNE 2016 - TBC

This is one of the toughest marathons around. Extremely hilly, the course boasts a total ascent of 2,997ft – reaching 1,050ft on the first climb alone. The route follows some of the West Pennine Moors' most beautiful country roads and trails. Brutal but brilliant.

hillrunner.org.uk

SOUTH DOWNS RELAY MARATHON, SUSSEX

18 JUNE 2016

The route takes in some of the South Downs' most stunning scenery, and offers runners a real taste of the beautiful location. The race itself is great fun, too. Starting at Slindon College, the relay race – consisting of teams of four – is split into quarters.

209events.com

MIDNIGHT MARATHON (TALYBONT-ON-USK), POWYS

25 JUNE 2016

The Midnight Marathon, held in Wales' stunning Brecon Beacons, is a gruelling challenge. Runners are given between 5.30pm and midnight to finish the race, which travels through forests, over streams and up mountains.

brutalevents.co.uk

GIANT'S HEAD MARATHON, DORSET

25 JUNE 2016

Named after the famous Cerne Abbas Giant that is on the course, this race is not for the faint hearted. Not only is it run off-road and up and down hills and, it's also a not-strictly-marathon length 26.5 miles. Easy!

whitestarrunning.co.uk

OVERSEAS MARATHONS

VODAFONE MALTA MARATHON, MALTA

28 FEBRUARY 2016

Runners will feel like they're taking a cultural tour as the island has been described as 'one big open-air museum'. Don't be worried about over-heating; in February the thermostat averages around a cool 13°C. Perfect conditions for running.

maltamarathon.com

ZURICH MARATON BARCELONA MARATHON, SPAIN

13 MARCH 2016

This urban circuit is one of the most attractive in Europe, passing by the city's main landmarks. Boasting a festival feel, with lots of animation points offering free entertainment from live bands.

zurichmaratobarcelona.es/eng

JERUSALEM WINNER MARATHON, ISRAEL

18 MARCH 2016

This event mixes physical challenge with exquisite landscapes, fresh mountain air and unique culture and heritage sites showcasing 3,000 years of history.

jerusalem-marathon.com

Vitality

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HALF MARATHON

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RUNHACKNEY.COM



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PARIS MARATHON

3 APRIL 2016

The Paris Marathon is one of the biggest races on the international circuit. Starting at Champs-Élysées, the course then heads down the Rue de Rivoli before weaving through the outskirts of east Paris. Then, the seasonally leafy roads take runners into Paris' largest park, Bois de Vincennes. The flat course makes for a smooth and enjoyable race, which passes some of the city's most famous landmarks.

schneiderelectricparismarathon.com/us

I RACED IT!

Paris Marathon

"I absolutely love Paris, and the race takes in many of the major sights: the Champs-Élysées, Notre Dame, the Eiffel Tower. View it as a sightseeing tour – a long, painful sightseeing tour."

Gareth Fletcher, London

MARATHON DES SABLES, MOROCCO

8-18 APRIL 2016

Named by the Discovery Channel as "the toughest footrace on earth", this event is one for the bold. Runners are expected to be self-sufficient as they make their way through the Sahara Desert, the world's most inhospitable climate, in five to six days. Mental strength is as important as physical fitness in this brutal event.

marathondessables.co.uk

VIENNA CITY MARATHON, AUSTRIA

10 APRIL 2016

Take a tour of Vienna's most modern and historic sites on this marathon route. Run by the bank of the beautiful River Danube, past the famous opera house and Schönbrunn Castle and many other superb examples of Vienna's architecture. We doubt that Ultravox will be belting out as you cross the finish line, but there will be plenty of crowd support to keep you going.

vienna-marathon.com

NN ROTTERDAM MARATHON, THE NETHERLANDS

10 APRIL 2016

This marathon weekend combines top sporting action with a festival feel. Expect a super fast course so you can aim for that PB with confidence. The program of events includes fun runs for the kids, a pasta party and a quarter marathon.

nnmarathonrotterdam.org

BOSTON MARATHON, USA

18 APRIL 2016

Who wouldn't love to run the world's oldest marathon? From its humble beginning in 1897, the Boston marathon has become an

iconic race. As you would expect from such an established event, the facilities second to none and you can expect regular hydration points, and portable toilets, along the course for your comfort.

baa.org

ZURICH MARATHON, SWITZERLAND

24 APRIL 2016

Noted for being well-organised, this race loops through the city centre so you can expect an amazing crowd of spectators to cheer you on. It's not exactly a flat route – but there's no sizeable hills of note either, so this is a great choice if you're after a more intermediate challenge.

zurichmarathon.ch

ROCK 'N' ROLL MADRID MARATHON, SPAIN

24 APRIL 2016

This is one of Spain's best running events and tends to sellout quickly. The marathon, although quite hilly and challenging, is extremely popular among most runners. The route is changed and adapted each year, but the course usually takes in most of Madrid's most famous sites.

es.competitor.com/madrid

GOOD LIFE FITNESS TORONTO MARATHON, CANADA

1 MAY 2016

The Toronto Marathon is not only a wonderfully scenic race, but it's one that offers fantastic PB potential. In 2013, over half of the event's participants clocked a personal best time. Starting at Mel Lastman Square in North York and ending at Ontario Place, the speedy race takes runners along a fast and downhill course.

torontomarathon.com

Vitality

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HARMONY GENEVA MARATHON, SWITZERLAND

8 MAY 2016

This beautiful race takes in some of the finest views that Geneva has to offer. Switzerland is a stunning country, and this city marathon is truly delightful. The course is 42,195K in length and includes the picturesque city centre, some beautiful locations and scenic countryside areas. Considering the nature of the country, the route is relatively flat too. So pack your bags, and prepare for a great trip!

harmonygenevemarathon.com/en



VOLKSWAGEN PRAGUE MARATHON, CZECH REPUBLIC

8 MAY 2016

This race plays host to around 10,000 runners and goes through the streets of Prague, where the architecture will keep you occupied while you run. You'll get a text message with your finish time at the end and free entry to selected museums and historic sites.

runczech.com

GREAT WALL MARATHON, CHINA

21 MAY 2016

Races don't get much more spectacular, or physically demanding, than the Great Wall Marathon. China's iconic landmark is globally recognised, and tourists travel from far and wide to walk it. So, what is it like to race on? Tough, really tough, but also incredible.

great-wall-marathon.com

COPENHAGAN MARATHON, DENMARK

22 MAY 2016

Runners will get to enjoy the sites of central Copenhagen as they make their way round this route, which starts and finishes at the harbour front on Islands Brygge. The course is mainly flat so it's a good option for first-timers.

copenhagenmarathon.dk/en

SCOTIABANK OTTAWA MARATHON, CANADA

29 MAY 2016

Canada's largest and fastest marathon is now in its 42nd year. Enjoy the beautiful scenery of Canada's capital as you take on this fast course, which is perfect for first-timers and those seeking a PB. An awesome overseas option.

runottawa.ca

TRANSYLVANIAN BEAR RACE, ROMANIA

4 JUNE 2016

If you're looking for something different, you've found it.

This course will take you through the unspoiled wilderness of Transylvania. If tales of vampires haven't already scared you, then – warning – this race is not for the faint-hearted. It's a tough route and the local wildlife includes bears that will make any fictional blood-sucker look cute and cuddly by comparison.

transylvanianbearrace.com

■ OBSTACLE/ULTRA/FUN

HELL DOWN SOUTH, HAMPSHIRE

16 JANUARY 2016

Longmoor Camp is the official home of the original HellRunner event. This race is tough and now it's wilder and wetter, hillier and hellier than ever. So lace up, wrap up and prepare to do battle with whatever this race throws at you.

hellrunner.co.uk

BRUTAL 10, SURREY

13 FEBRUARY 2016

Even though this 10K event uses only natural obstacles to challenge your resolve, it really is brutal. Expect a lot of hills, water, mud and uneven ground so make sure you're wearing sturdy trail shoes to see you through.

brutalrun.co.uk

■ I RACED IT!

Hell Down South

"It's a beast of a race but the sense of achievement at the end makes it all worthwhile. The freezing 'Bog of Doom' is particularly challenging and there are some great running sections throughout. Hellishly enjoyable!"

Tom Bristow, MR's Digital Writer



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WWW.THESUFFERINGRACE.CO.UK



SPRING WOLF, WARWICKSHIRE

9-10 APRIL 2016

Whether you take it on as a lone wolf or as part of a pack, this 10K off-road run will test you to your limits. The course is packed with man-made and natural obstacles. This is really wild running which will take you through woods, lakes and fields.

thewolfrun.com



THE MIGHTY DEERSTALKER, INNERLEITHEN

12 MARCH 2016

Pack your headtorch for this pitch-dark race, deep in the Scottish borders. Sign up for the full marathon, but if that gets too much, you can drop out at the halfway mark and make your way over to the afterparty to enjoy grub, beers and bands.

ratrace.com/mightydeerstalker2016

I RACED IT!

Lidl Kingston Breakfast Run

"This is a top event, ideal for the spring marathon season or any longer stuff in April/May time. Plus, you get a mug instead of medal. Let's face it, medals are old news. Give me something like a mug or bag any day of the week."

Louis Waterman-Evans

LIDL KINGSTON

**BREAKFAST RUN,
KINGSTON-UPON-TAMES**

3 APRIL 2016

Running on your own is great, but we recommend taking this one on with a friend. The course will take you through the historic and pretty market town of Kingston-Upon-Thames, and you can choose from various distances

from eight to 20 miles – making this event a great practice run if you're marathon training. Once you cross the finish line you'll be rewarded with a goody bag from Lidl for your effort.

humanrace.co.uk/event/lidl-kingston-breakfast-run

DIRTY DOZEN, LONDON

16 APRIL 2016

It may well be a super-friendly race – but that doesn't mean it'll go easy on you. Expect over 20 obstacles to stand between you and the finish line on this 12K course. Afterwards, warm up at the event village where you can enjoy food, drinks and music.

dirtydozenraces.com/race/13

GRIM CHALLENGE BEAST IN THE EAST, SWANLEY

9 MAY 2015

This super tough 10K will test your metal. Make your way through mud, sand and hills of the country's best motocross circuit. But be warned, going downhill is just as tough as the uphill, so there's no rest for the wicked.

grimchallenge.co.uk/beast-event-info

JUDGEMENT DAY, UCKFIELD

21 MAY 2016

Designed to push runners to the limit, this will be the first Judgment Day trail run at Pippingford Park. Choose from a 10K or half-marathon distance. The course specifics are a closely guarded secret, though hills and stunning scenery is a definite.

judgement-day.co.uk

KESWICK MOUNTAIN FESTIVAL

19-22 MAY 2016

Catering for runners of all abilities, the festival is made up of numerous trail running events from 5K to ultramarathon. Each race offers a real mix of terrain and runners can expect wide open trails, tough descents set against beautiful scenery.

keswickmountainfestival.co.uk

BEAR GRYLLS ARCTIC SURVIVAL, EDINBURGH

21 MAY 2016

With survival expert Bear Grylls putting his name to it, you can guess that this race will be no walk in the park. As the name suggests, you'll face extreme temperatures to get to the finish.

mudstacle.com/event/bear-grylls-arctic-survival-edinburgh/2016-05-21



SATURDAY 7  SUNDAY 8 MAY 2016

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100 BEST RACES



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WILLOW WARRIOR, STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET

12 JUNE 2016

Unleash your inner warrior at this muddy obstacle course. You'll need agility and speed to successfully dodge paint guns, crawl under cargo nets and take on the giant slippery slide – to name but a few of the natural and man-made obstacles standing in your way. Taking place in June, you shouldn't have to worry about the colder temperatures which can make winter obstacle races a little less appealing. Go it alone or compete as part of a team – you'll have fun either way!

willowfoundation.org.uk/willowwarrior

URBAN ATTACK SUB ZERO, MILTON KEYNES

18 JUNE 2016

The Milton Keynes indoor snow arena is being transformed into a spectacular mountainscape especially for this event. It's a race against time as you weave your way in and out of pine trees, and a few other obstacles. You've got six minutes to beat the clock, making for a fast and frenetic event. The fastest 30 racers make it to the final. If you're competitive – and preferably quite quick – this is the event for you. Afterwards, head over to the warm Bavarian-themed spectator zone for some Schnapps.

urbanattack.co.uk/sub-zero-milton-keynes.aspx

RACE TO THE KING, SUSSEX/HAMPSHIRE

25-26 JUNE 2016

It doesn't matter if you walk, run or jog this event. What does matter is that you enjoy the breathtaking scenery of the South Downs on this 52-mile ultra-marathon challenge. The South Downs provides some of the best trail running opportunities in the South East of England, and this race makes the most of the undulating landscape. Starting near Arundel, the route takes you through the South Downs National Park for a climatic finish on the steps of Winchester Cathedral, the burial place of the first Kings of England. It's a hilly route, for sure, but also a rewarding one. A royally good time is guaranteed.

racetotheking.com

THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGIONS MAJOR MIDLANDS, ALCESTER

12 MARCH 2016

There's not much we can tell you about this race at a brand new venue for the Midlands. That's because it's top secret. However, from the limited information available, we're guessing runners should prepare themselves for obstacles, mud, wild terrain and cold water. So you had better be fighting fit to take on the challenge, but luckily a 40-strong troop of elite troops will line the course ready to offer you encouragement and a helping hand, should you need it.

britmilfit.com/major-series/events/midlands



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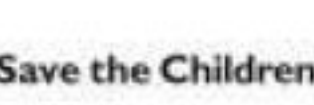
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BIG MARATHON CHALLENGE MEET THE TEAM

A globetrotter, a mental health spokesperson, a speedy pensioner and a busy father-of-three – meet the four inspiring men taking part in this year's Big Marathon Challenge

In October, we put out the call for applicants for our exciting new initiative, the Big Marathon Challenge. You answered in your droves, and whittling it down to just four people was almost as difficult as running a marathon itself. However, we're very pleased with our final selection: a diverse group of men running for a wide range of reasons. It's time to meet the team.



Name: Jack Davies
Age: 68
Marathon: London
In a nutshell: Speedy sixty-something growing old competitively

What motivated you to apply for the Big Marathon Challenge?

I love a challenge, and the challenge here was just getting accepted into the team. What attracted me to this, though, was the thought of having a personal coach, as I have always trained by myself before. I am hoping that a coach can help me get under the 3hrs 30mins mark.

What motivated you to take up running?

I played amateur football until my early thirties and ran a lot. After that there were only occasional runs in futile attempts to keep the beer belly under control. My son, and then his wife, entered and ran in the Manchester 10K and I thought that I could do that as well. The following year I did enter and really enjoyed the occasion, the atmosphere and the personal challenge.

What was your best ever run?

This has to be the Manchester Marathon in 2013. My previous marathon was completed in 3hrs 50mins and I just wanted to beat that. A flat course and superb spectators spurred me on to finish in 3hrs 34mins. There was a television interview straight after – I never even saw it – and a trophy for being first in my age group. A magical day.



Name: Jean-Marc Knoll
Age: 41
Marathon: North Korea
In a nutshell: Restless wanderer running the most secret of marathons

What motivated you to apply for the Big Marathon Challenge?

To gain a better understanding of the sport and my physical ability through the personal coaching that comes with the Challenge. I have become addicted to running, but have never done any intervals, fartlek or conditioning and would like to push myself further with some expert help. The initial meeting and exchanges with our coach, Ben, have already taught me a lot. I can't wait to get started!

What motivated you to take up running?

I received a letter from my gym, informing me that they were increasing the monthly fee, and I wasn't even using it more than two or three times a month. I cancelled it on the spot but felt guilty and went down to the river in Putney on my first outdoor run. It was a sunny day, the Thames looked amazing and there were lots of runners out. I fell in love with running immediately and quickly understood why it's described as an addiction.

What was your best ever run?

The Craven Cottage 10K in February of this year: it is the only race where I have given 100% – absolutely every ounce of strength and energy that I had in me. The elation I felt at getting a PB (43:12) was intense! »

Follow Jack on Twitter @jakrunner1



Follow Jean-Marc on Twitter @jeanmarcknoll

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NUTRITION: High5
Raphael Deinhardt
High 5's technical and marketing coordinator is a former elite-level cyclist. His performance experience means he's perfectly placed to provide indispensable advice on pre-, mid- and post-exercise nutrition.
highfive.co.uk



COACH: Full Potential
Ben Barwick
Ben is a biomechanics expert and running coach. He loves seeing the progression of those he coaches, and his detailed training plans will deliver the gents to the start line in the form of their lives.
fullpotential.co.uk



KIT: Asics
Michael Moore
Michael is a technical representative with a deep knowledge of running apparel. Together with the team at Asics, he'll help the team to get the most out of their kit and pick the running shoes best for them.
asics.co.uk



PHYSIO: Pure Sports Medicine
Ellie Williams
Ellie is a physiotherapist and sports fanatic. She'll be on hand to help each of the guys to build a fitter, healthier and more balanced body – and hopefully get to the start line injury free.
puresportsmed.com



Name: Gary Brazier
Age: 43
Marathon: London
In a nutshell: Busy father-of-three taking on the challenge of a lifetime

What motivated you to apply for the Big Marathon Challenge?

Being a total beginner, I thought I could do with some expert help. And what better place than from a running magazine? Being part of the Big Marathon Challenge has given me the perfect motivation, at just the right time, to keep me on track and on target for the London Marathon.

What motivated you to take up running?

In a nutshell, my wife. Over the past few years I have seen my wife complete four marathons, including London and Brighton, and an ultramarathon. Last year I watched her complete London in 4hrs 38mins, raising over £3,000 in the process. The atmosphere on the day was electric. I think it was at that point I decided that I wanted to experience it firsthand.

What was your best ever run?

I only started running in mid-October 2015, so at the moment every time I run I seem to get a little quicker, a little stronger and set new personal bests. Already this week I have set a PB in the Folkestone parkrun of 28mins 47secs and ran the longest I have ever run: seven miles in 75 minutes. I'd probably class that as my best run to date.

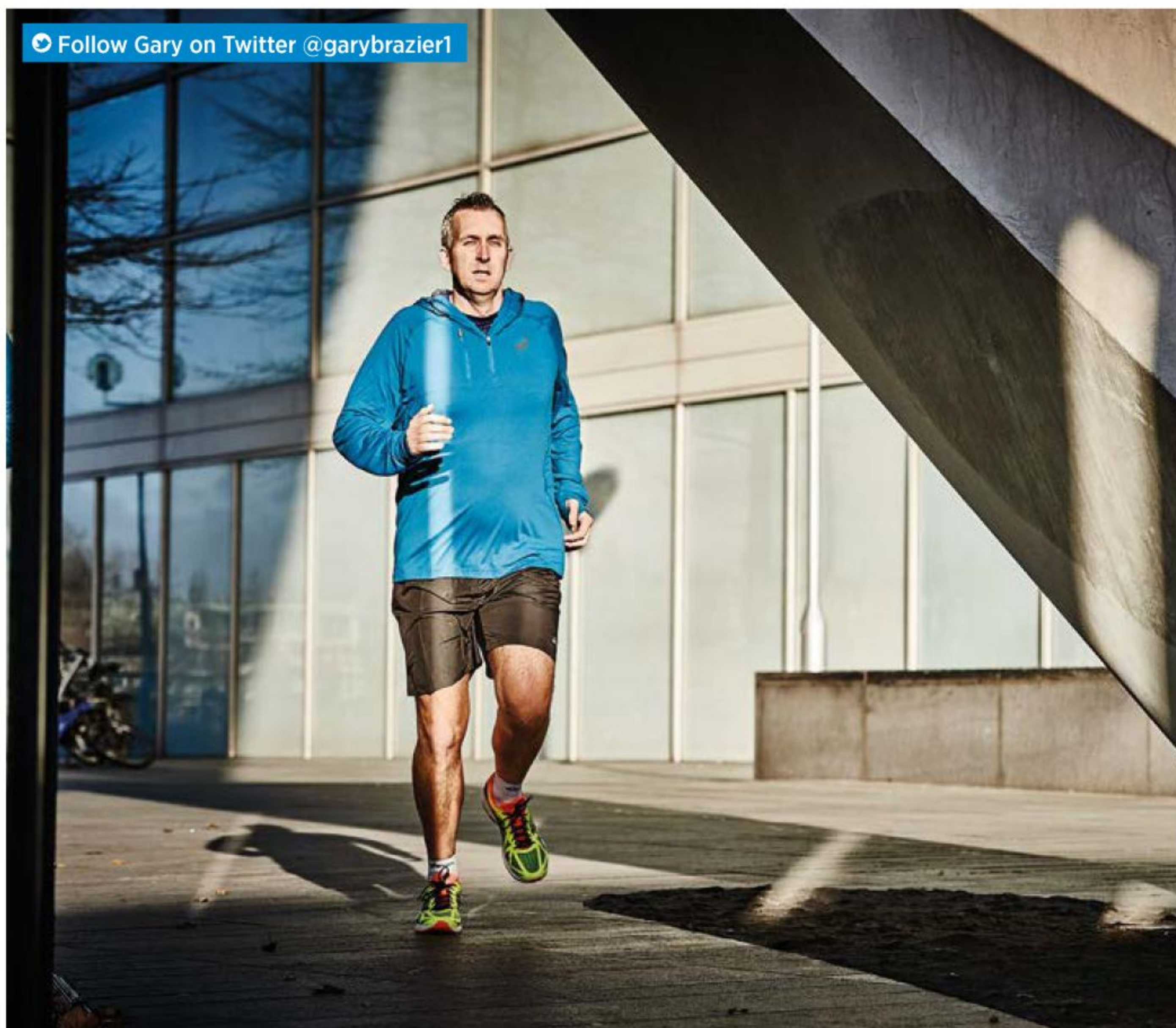


Name: Adrian Reynolds
Age: 34
Marathon: Brighton
In a nutshell: Inspiring mental health advocate who finds peace in running

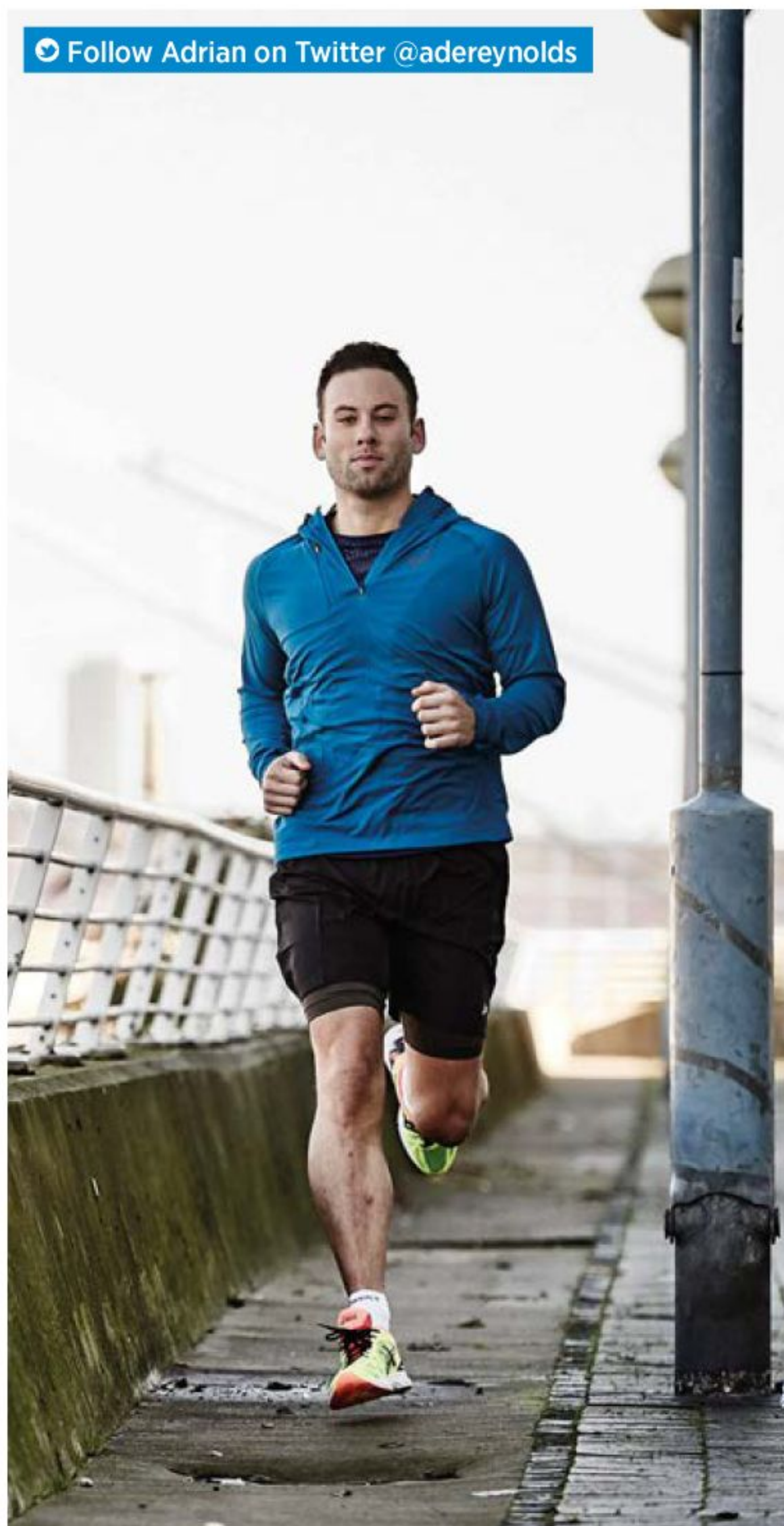
What motivated you to apply for the Big Marathon Challenge?

I had signed up to Brighton when I agreed to also take on the London Marathon for Tourette's Action UK, a charity I've written about running for in the past. I've never really had much guidance in my training, or followed a long-term plan, so thought it would be interesting to see what I could achieve while attempting two in the space of a week. I've read *Men's Running* for several years and the prospect of being involved in this feature has really motivated me to learn more, train properly and improve, while hopefully increasing understanding about how running can benefit mental health conditions.

Follow Gary on Twitter @garybrazier1



Follow Adrian on Twitter @adereynolds



What motivated you to take up running?

Besides the challenge of going further and faster, running has proven the most cathartic and beneficial exercise. Living with Tourette's Syndrome can be exhausting but, rather than exacerbating that, running has put me in the best place possible to deal with it.

What was your best ever run?

It's hard to look beyond my first marathon, London in 2012. It wasn't my fastest, but it was something I'd never dreamed of being able to complete having never run more than 5K a couple of years before. 🏆



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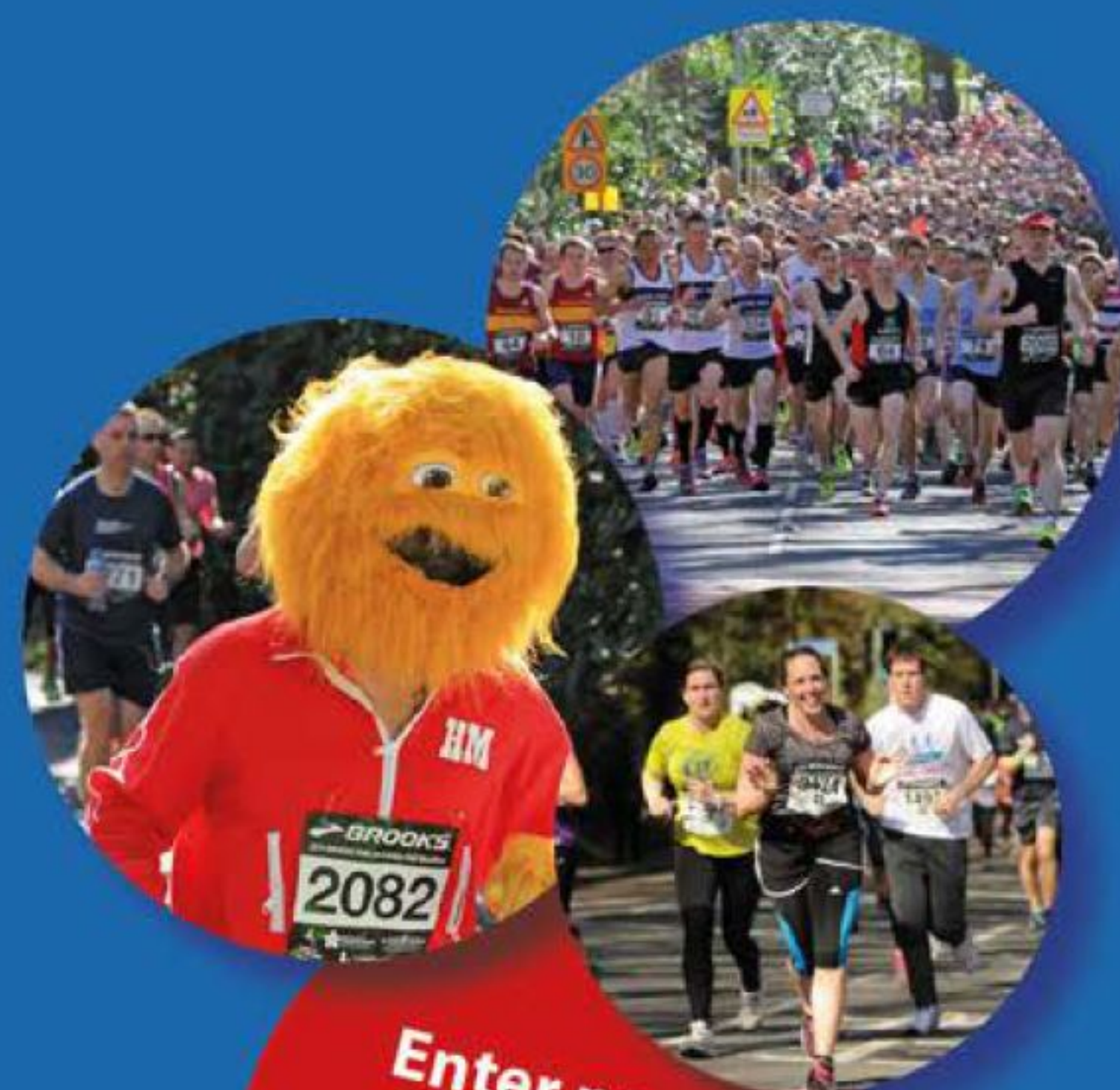
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Marathon runners anonymous

There's a group of obsessives who can't stop running marathons.
Michael Donlevy meets them and asks: are you addicted?

Are you still feeling fit after Christmas? If you're not too hungover, how about rounding off the year by running the Flitch Way Marathon New Year's Eve in Braintree, Essex, on 31 December? If you're really hardcore, you could then hang around and kick off 2016 by entering the Flitch Way Marathon New Year's Day just 24 hours later. And if you're truly bananas, that will be the first of many such 26.2-mile events you will be taking in over the coming 12 months, rather than simply training for one or two big races.

That's because there's more to marathon running than the big events in major cities, and there's a hardcore group of obsessives who will travel to every far-flung corner of the UK – and beyond – to run races midweek, sometimes back to back, with just a few like-minded hardy souls and the elements for company.

We all love running – that's why we're here – but this seems a little excessive. How on earth do you end up becoming hooked on 26.2-milers to the point where you're prepared to devote your life to the search for just one more finish line?

Traviss Willcox, chairman of the 100 Marathon Club, has completed an eye-watering, knee-trembling, 372 marathons since 2009, but his hobby had humble beginnings. "My girlfriend wanted to run the London Marathon but had nobody to train with so I volunteered. In the end, she didn't get in to London but we signed up

for another and it all went from there." But while Willcox and the members of his club – which is actually open to people who have completed at least 50 marathons – have nothing against the big city races, there's just a sense that they revel in the smaller events that most London runners have never even heard of.

"The most obscure, I think, are midweek marathons around lakes in Milton Keynes," says Glen Keegan, who has completed more than 80 marathons. "I've done track ones, I've done a marathon in Namibia, but wet evenings in Milton Keynes are... not the least pleasant, but the least inviting."

There are rules, though – you can't just strap on a number and run for 26.2 miles. "The smallest entry in the marathons I've run is in the high twenties," says Willcox. "The 100 Marathon Club defines a marathon as having at least 25 finishers so I wouldn't do anything below that."

BAD ROMANCE

The good news is that there are many weird and wonderful races to choose from, and you can find a list at 100marathonclub.org.uk. Upcoming examples include the Valentine's Day Marathon, whose organiser ponders, "What better way to treat your loved one than to run around with them in the delightful surrounds of Gravesend, the M2 and the High Speed rail link in the middle of chilly February?"

While the tongue is planted firmly in

cheek here, it does beg the question: why?

"I don't think anyone necessarily enjoys running a marathon – it's too painful," says Steve Edwards, who has completed over 700 marathons in an average time of 3:17. "I guess I do it because I can – it's there to be done and ultimately it's another one towards achieving my ambition of a world-record 1,000 marathons averaging a sub-3:20 finish time for each one." Even in some obscure UK town on a wet and windy Tuesday night? "In the UK it's mainly the camaraderie of sharing a run with like-minded folk," says Willcox.

And those are the two key points in the view of Andy Lane, professor of sports psychology at the University of Wolverhampton. "The marathon is a challenge every week for these runners, and one they know they can do. The sort of people who like doing it are the ones »



Marathon man: Steve Edwards is on his way to 1,000 marathons

who like collecting numbers. But for ultra and multi-marathon runners it's awfully social. They help and support each other along the way. It's a very friendly environment."

OUT OF CONTROL?

Is it an addiction? "To a degree, yes," says Willcox. "FOMO – fear of missing out – is a big thing. We all want to do the nice races and get the nice medals." Edwards isn't so sure: "I like to think of it as dedication. Back in 1988 I had an ambition to try and become one of the most successful multi-marathon runners in the world, not just running quantity but also trying to run respectable finish times. I never forget seeing in a magazine once: 'Addicted is a word the lazy use to describe the dedicated', and I thought that was brilliant." And Keegan disagrees completely: "I think the definition of addiction is if it's harmful. I'm in my fifties and I think being able to run five marathons a week is pretty healthy."

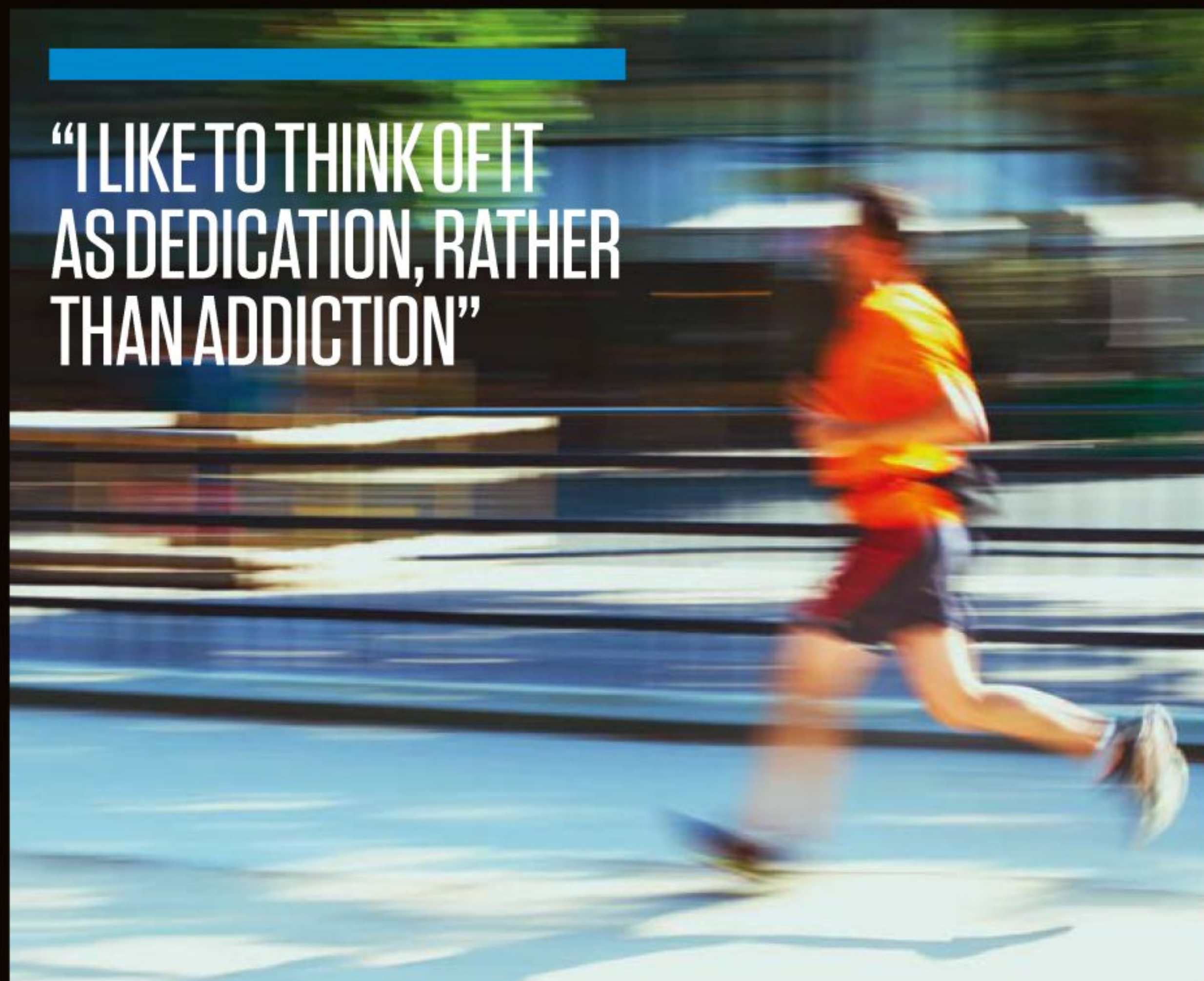
Lane puts it into perspective: "There are lots of people who run for two hours every Sunday. The 100 Club runners don't train so hard so they go to every marathon fresh. And in many cases they're not trying to beat their own personal bests – they're just trying to get that positive experience every week."

Behind every multi-marathon runner there would appear to be a supportive and long-suffering family. Edwards' wife travels with him to every race, while Keegan says, "Weekday marathons are the best because they don't interfere with family life as much. That said, they do tend to roll their eyes – 'Here he goes again'. Although the parents of my childrens' friends all know about my running, so deep down my kids must be fairly proud."

But perhaps Willcox sums it up best: "They think I'm an idiot." 🐶



"I LIKE TO THINK OF IT AS DEDICATION, RATHER THAN ADDICTION"



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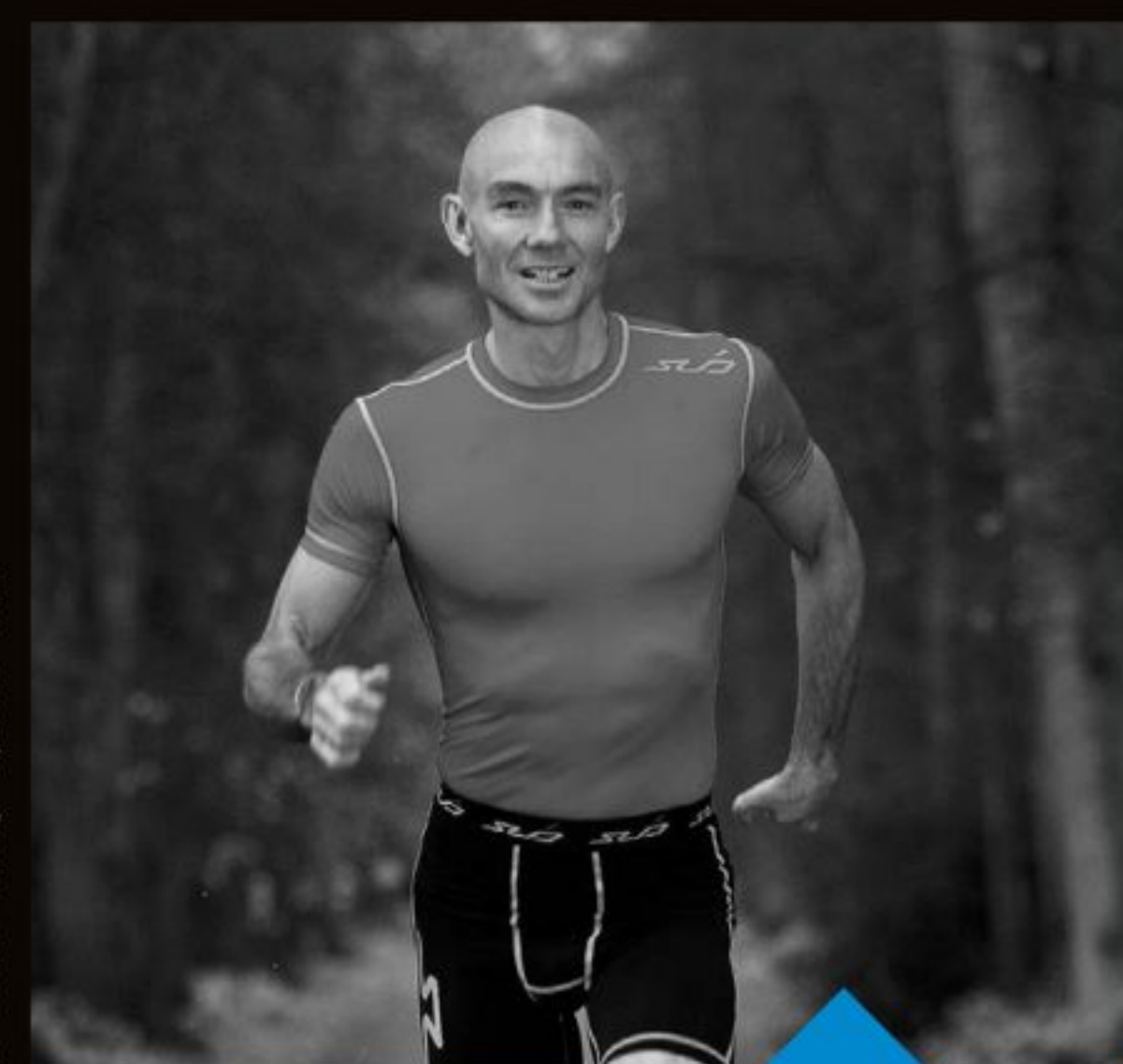
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■ TRAVISS WILLCOX

The man who enjoyed marathons so much he became chairman of the 100 Marathon Club

I'm a webmaster for golftoday.co.uk – we work from home and at odd hours so I'm very fortunate that I can work from anywhere I can get an internet connection. That's helped no end in enabling me to complete these marathons and do the travelling.

I took over the 100 Marathon Club in 2014 and it's for folk who have run 50 or more marathons, although you're only allowed to wear the kit from marathon number 101. You get presented with your 100 Marathon Club shirt when you complete your 100th and it's also very traditional to have a special cake made. We have nearly 500 members now and we're growing all the time as more and more people realise they can do these things.



■ STEVE EDWARDS

The 53-year-old world-record chaser looks back on some of his highs

My first marathon was Coventry – my original home town – in October 1981. I was only 18 and I did everything wrong because I didn't know any better, although I still managed 3:38. The next day my legs were that stiff and my feet that sore I could hardly walk and swore I'd never run again!

I loved the marathon on the tiny island of Tresco in the Scilly Isles. I ran it three times and the course was seven laps of this gorgeous remote island.

My wife Teresa is very supportive and comes with me to all my races. I couldn't have achieved all that I have without her support. My parents worry that I do too much and that I might regret it later in life. I don't know if they'll be proved right but they also know how much I get out of it.



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WALK THIS WAY

Isaac Williams delves into the mysterious world of race walking and, in doing so, gets put through his paces by Tom Bosworth, a man who can walk faster than most of us can run

I've always thought of myself as something of a speedy walker. Not, admittedly, the first thing to go on my CV, but a useful life skill nonetheless.

'No running' signs never phase me. It'll be a cold day in hell when I'm forced to break stride for the bus.

But I'm about to have a wake-up call. Turns out, there's a whole sport out there dedicated to the late-for-work march – and those who compete do so at a pace that needs to be seen to be believed. This I discover the hard way, on a gloomy morning in early December.

I'm outside Leeds Beckett's Headingley Campus, struggling to keep pace with Tom Bosworth. His 10K PB of 39mins 36secs is a good few minutes quicker than mine. But there's one important difference: he set his walking.

Tom and his coach, Andi Drake, have very kindly allowed me to take part in one of his training sessions in the build up to the Rio Olympics, and 10 minutes into a 10K tempo 'walk' (I, of course, am running) all my previous misconceptions – mainly

centred on it being a fairly weird sport for fairly old people – have been well and truly laid to rest.

STEP BY STEP

"The rules are simple", says Tom, the UK's number-one race walker. "Your back toe can't leave the ground until the heel of the front foot has touched down, and you have to land with a straight leg." Due to the fast-paced nature of the event, however, and the fact that judges are unaided by technology, violations do go unpunished.

"Each race has between five to eight judges, depending on the event," Tom adds. "Occasionally, on the slow-mo TV cameras, you'll see an athlete off the ground, but it all comes down to the judges on the day." Three strikes, though, and you're out.

Running alongside him, the pace Tom is able to walk at is incredible. The action, though – exaggerated arm drive, straight legs, wiggling hips – looks far from natural. It looks, in short, as if it would be easier to run. The hips, in particular, look as if they »

Look who's walking:
Tom Bosworth during
a 10K tempo walk
around Leeds Beckett's
Headingley Campus





TOM'S TOP TIPS

1: FIND A CLUB

“There’s a surprising amount of race walking clubs out there. Have a google and see what you can find. Support is key.”

2: WALK AS FAST AS YOU CAN!

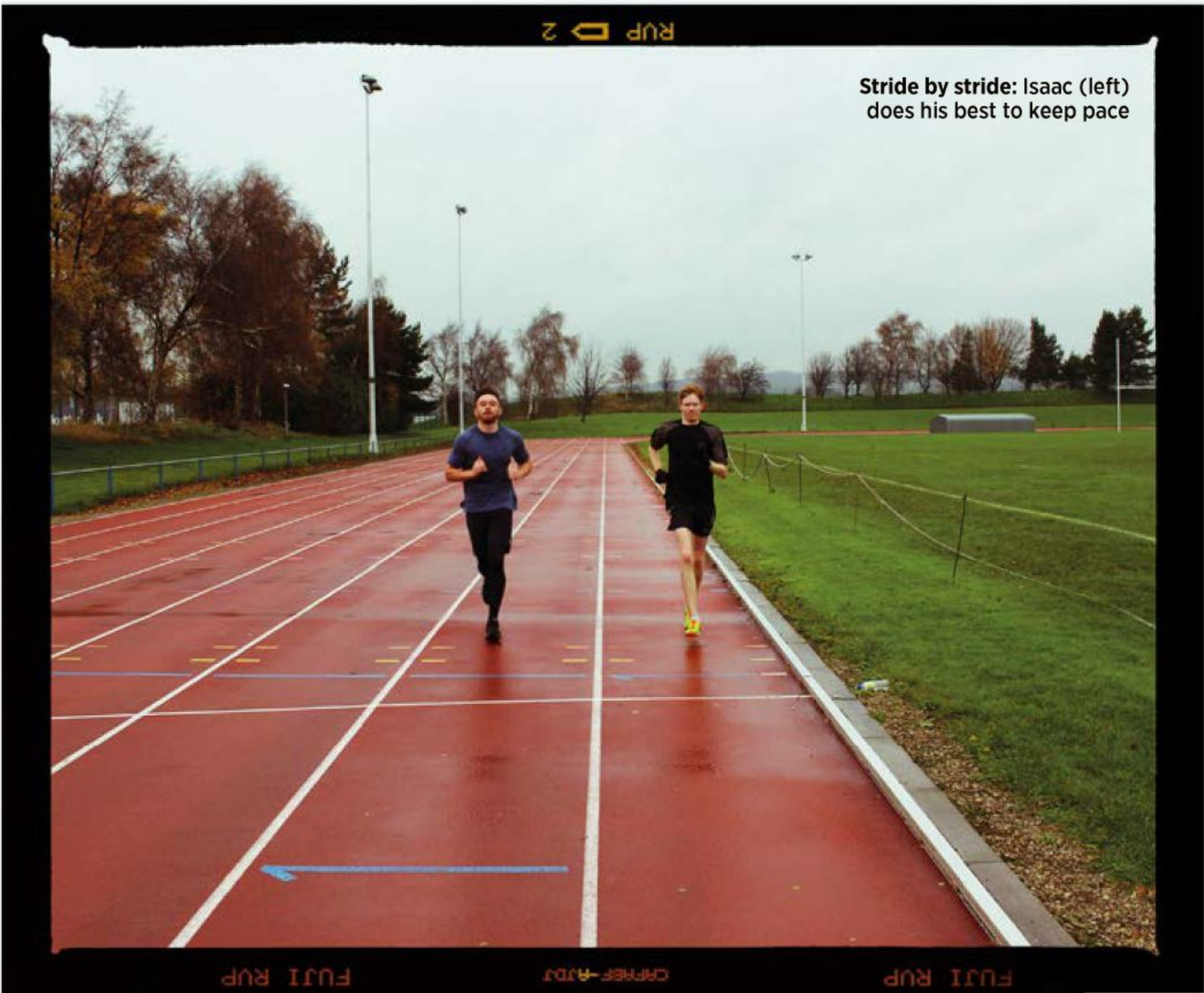
“I do a lot of parkruns and there’s nothing better than seeing the expressions on the faces of the runners I beat. You never know, you might have a hidden talent.”

3: ENJOY IT

“Sport’s there to be enjoyed. Don’t take yourself too seriously.”

are taking a lot of pressure. He assures me, however, that it’s a relatively low-impact sport: “One of the great misconceptions about race walking is that it’s hard on the joints; it’s actually a lot less impactful than running.”

Which leads to my next question: why not just run? “Basically, my mum took me and my sister down to the local athletics club, Tonbridge AC, and said, ‘Keep fit!’ I did join a running group to start off with, but my sister started race walking and I wanted an excuse to beat her so, when



Stride by stride: Isaac (left) does his best to keep pace

I was about 13, I took that up as well. Gradually I began to get better, until I reached the point where I realised that I might actually have a future in the sport.”

And is it all walking these days, or does running still play a part in training? “I’m not completely strict with myself,” he says. “I’ll allow myself to run downhill in training, as keeping a straight leg on a hill can be quite jarring. I also sometimes do a steady run on Sundays, just to mix the training up and keep up my fitness.”

As we come to the end of the 10K – 44 minutes after setting off – my legs are aching and I’m trying desperately to act as if that was a (ahem) walk in the park. But there’s no rest for the wicked. Next up, Tom has to endure 10 lots of 500m efforts, with just 100m recovery in between. Unfortunately, “photography duty” means I’ll have to settle for just 5x500m. The sacrifices I make...

Twenty minutes and a total distance of 10 miles later, the morning’s work is finally over – and a newfound respect for the race walking world has been well and truly instilled. Strange? Yes. But when the best in the business are walking quicker than most us can run, who are we to judge?

Sometimes, just sometimes, it might pay to walk before you can run. 📷

“IT’S ACTUALLY A LOT LESS IMPACTFUL THAN RUNNING”

RACE WALK RECORDS



5K – 18:21
Robert Korzeniowski
(POL), 16 Sep 1990



20K – 1:16:36
Yusuke Suzuki
(JPN), 15 March 2015



40K – 2:51:13
Denis Nizhegorodov
(RUS), 13 June 2004



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Great
Manchester Run
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JCP Swansea
Half Marathon
26 June



Great North Run
11 September

Windsor Half
Marathon
25 September

“I DON’T WANT
ANYONE TO GO
THROUGH THE
SAME PAIN”



"I'M RUNNING FOR MY DAD AND FOR CANCER RESEARCH UK"

When Finn Quilter's family was shattered by cancer, he set himself the task of raising funds and awareness for Cancer Research UK. This year he'll take on the Brighton Marathon. Will you join him?

Sociology student Finn Quilter, 19, from Hertfordshire, will be taking on the 2016 Brighton Marathon in memory of his father, Jeff, who lost his battle with pancreatic cancer.

"My dad's diagnosis and loss to pancreatic cancer sent a shiver down my spine about how deadly and destructive cancer can be. The deterioration my dad went through was heartbreaking, I can only think what it must have been like for him. He was very brave and fought it with the same humour and strength he always had."

After his dad passed away in July last year, Finn decided he wanted to do something positive. "After having this experience, I can see what cancer does to people. That's why I'm running for Cancer Research UK; I don't want anyone to go through the same pain."

HELP STOP CANCER

Although he has run 10K races in the past, this will be Finn's first marathon. "Brighton is one of my favourite places. The route sounds awesome. The marathon is an outlet where I can raise money to help stop cancer as well as giving me a healthy focus."

Preparing for a marathon is tough, but Cancer Research UK's online training plans are full of expert advice, and Finn's friends have also been keen to lend a hand. "The training is hard but I'm enjoying it. I'm trying to go out frequently and slowly increase my speeds and distances when I feel comfortable. My friends motivate me, I play lacrosse at university and I've had the backing of the team."

"Running alongside my other sporting commitments is the main challenge. When the runs start getting longer, and the rest of my life gets busier, staying focused on running is going to be something I'll need to maintain."

"My family have always been there for me and have been generous with their donations. My friends at university have been awesome. Cancer Research UK have been helping with awareness, and the freebies like vests and shirts are a bonus, too. Everyone's been great!"

BRING ABOUT GOOD

"Raising money is the main goal and I would like to show my appreciation to the people who have donated. I want to convey how important this fundraising is and that the money will be able to help Cancer Research UK fund their great life-saving work."

Finn has words of encouragement for anyone who would like to get involved. "It's a great thing to do. If you're wavering on the edge of doing it or not, trust me, do it. I know if I hadn't applied, I'd be regretting it now. Even if a marathon is not on your agenda there are tons of smaller events around the country. Whatever you're doing to fundraise for something you care about



– whether it's a marathon, a 5K or a cake sale – it's going to bring about more good than if you don't do it."

As he makes his way along the course, Finn will have his own motivation, "I'll be thinking about why I am doing this marathon, how my dad will be looking down on me, and how the money will help cancer sufferers in the future."

SUPPORT FINN

If you would like to help Finn raise money for Cancer Research UK, you can donate at justgiving.com/finnquilter1996

ABOUT CANCER RESEARCH UK

- Every day in the UK there are more than 400 people diagnosed with cancer.
- Around 8,700 people in the UK died from pancreatic cancer in 2012, that's nearly 24 people every day. Pancreatic cancer is the fifth most common cause of cancer death in the UK.
- 37% of cases of pancreatic cancer are preventable, linked to lifestyle factors such as smoking or obesity.
- Cancer Research UK receives no government funding for its life-saving research. Every step it makes towards beating cancer relies on every pound donated.

For further information about Cancer Research UK, or to find out how you can help, visit cruk.org or call **0300 123 1022**.

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FEBRUARY



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INSIDE

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ALL SAID & RUN

PROJECT TRAIL 2015

This year's Project Trail comes to an end with an epic race at the wet and windy Endurancelife Gower Half Marathon. It's time to find out how the guys got on

Follow Tim on Twitter @timmajor44



ROBBIE SAYS:

"While he hadn't run a competitive race before the Project started, Tim was certainly a racer by the time it finished. He enjoys every aspect of running, be it early mornings of mud or rolling coastal hills. Being the first Project Trail finisher was the result of consistent hard work and rest. Next up: the world of ultrarunning."

learned a huge amount about positive visualisation and mental toughness and needed both. Massive thanks to our coach, Robbie – he's been brilliant.

What's the greatest thing you've learned during Project Trail?

That I'm a runner! Before Project Trail, I was never confident enough to say that out loud. I've had the chance to take my sport seriously and it's opened my eyes to what I can achieve.

Has it made you want to take part in more trail events? If so, which ones?

Absolutely. The problem is fitting them all in. I've signed up for the Ultimate Trails 55K in the Lakes next summer and I'm considering an Endurancelife ultra on the East Sussex coast in March. I definitely have a heightened sense of ambition now and am ready to take my running to the next level.

South Wales is not renowned for its year-round sunshine. Even by these standards, however, the conditions at the Endurancelife Gower Half Marathon were adverse in the extreme: driving rain, howling wind and ankle-deep mud. But then, as legendary coach Bill Bowerman once noted, "There is no thing as bad weather, only soft people." So with waterproofs on, hoods done up and rubber dinghies stowed in bags, the Project Trail boys headed to the rain-soaked start line for the race of their lives...

NAME: Tim Major
AGE: 34
JOB: Music lawyer
FROM: Kent



So, how did the race go?

It went well, thanks. I finished in under two hours and in 15th place overall, so was happy given the course and conditions. There are a couple of things I'd probably

do differently if I ran it again, like not going off in the wrong direction after a checkpoint, but I put in maximum effort and was pleased with the result.

We hear the weather was challenging. Did it blow a gale?

It was like doing a muddy hill session in a car wash that was simultaneously jammed on its 'wash and dry' functions! Mark and I drove down to the start line the night before and I could barely open the car door against the wind. The weather definitely made it more difficult but, at the same time, it was all the more memorable as a result.

How did the training help you during the race?

There's no way I'd have managed the time I did without the training. It made me fitter, stronger and more capable of withstanding difficult conditions. There were a lot of ascents and the hill sessions definitely got me through those. I've also

NAME: Mark Rochester
AGE: 38
JOB: Interior designer
FROM: Yorkshire



Follow Mark on Twitter @rochestersdaily

So, how did the race go?

It was a lot tougher than I imagined, partly due to the weather and the conditions underfoot, but also because of the course itself. Endurancelife describes it as 'strenuous', which I can now say with some authority translates as 'so unspeakably arduous that every muscle in your body will be screaming for mercy'.

We hear the weather was challenging. Did it blow a gale?

The awfulness of the weather seemed comical afterwards, but I don't remember laughing much during the race – for one thing, I was too busy trying not to get blown away. I've honestly never run in such difficult conditions before. The weird thing is, though, I think we all loved it. If you asked us to do it again tomorrow, we'd happily do it.

How did the training help you during the race?

The most important lesson I've learned is also the most counter-intuitive: how to slow down in order to get faster. Before Robbie stepped in, I thought training meant running as fast as you could, for as long as you could; I spent a year doing this and saw absolutely no improvement. Now 80% of my training runs are at an easy conversational pace, averaging 10min/miles. I wasn't sure how this would translate into a half-marathon race; 13 miles is a difficult distance as you need to go fast, but not flat-out. It's testament to Robbie's knowledge that his advice paid off – I'd gained speed and stamina without even noticing it.

What's the greatest thing you've learned during Project Trail?

I used to believe in talent: the idea that some people are just born with an innate ability to do a given thing well. Project

"I'VE HONESTLY NEVER RUN IN SUCH DIFFICULT CONDITIONS BEFORE"

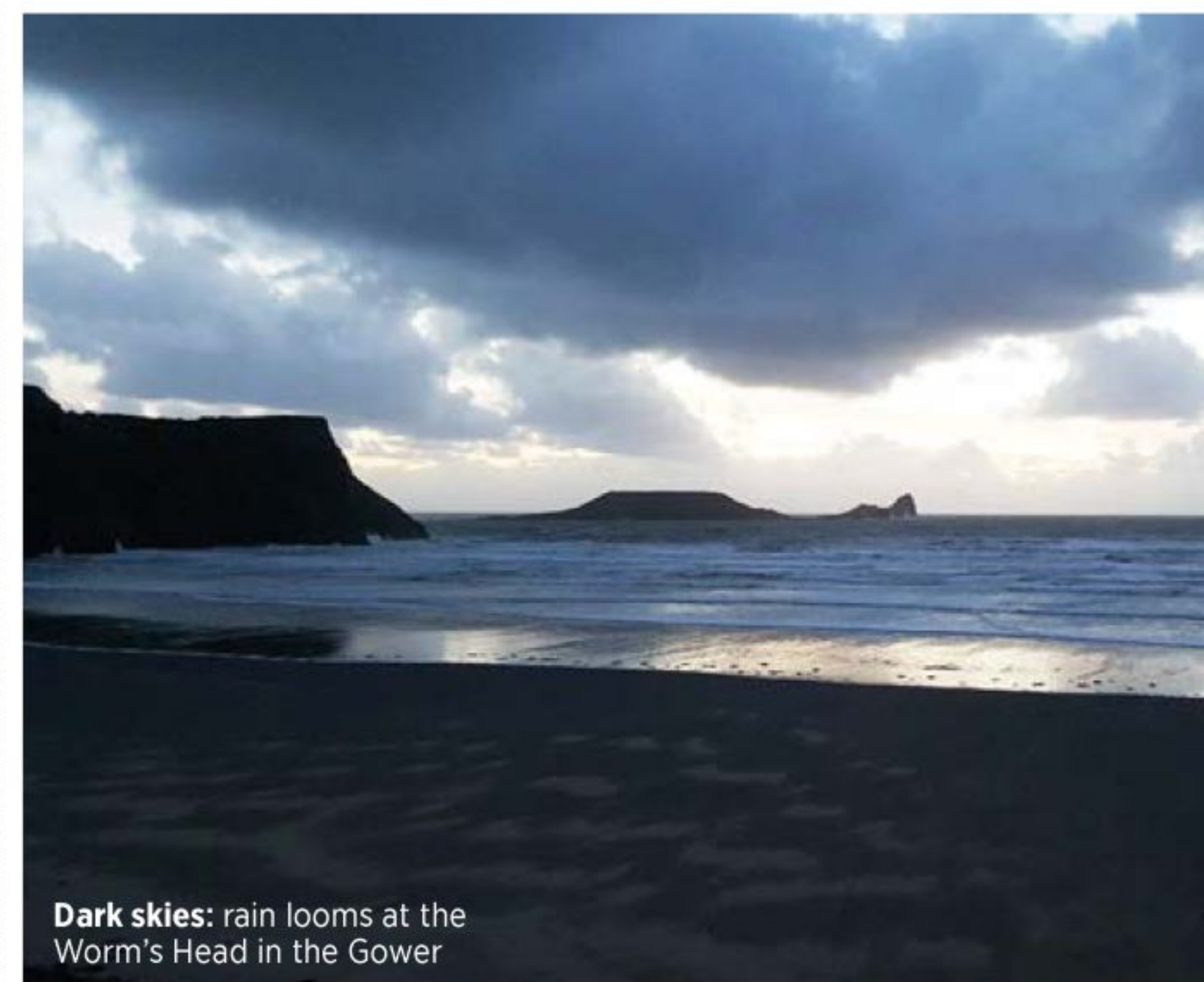
ROBBIE SAYS:

"Mark finished strongly at the Gower Half, and his sensible pacing will see him achieve highly in any race. Pushing at the right time in a race often takes years to develop but Mark has shown an understanding of this from the offset. I'm excited to be training him for ultramarathons in the future. Welcome to the dark side, Mark."

Trail has shown me that this isn't necessarily the case. It's probable that almost anyone can run a half-marathon, as long as they're willing to put in the training. I'm a fairly ordinary bloke and I didn't take part in Project Trail because I thought I had a natural advantage. If I can do it, there's every chance most other people can too.

Has it made you want to take part in more trail events? If so, which ones?

Yes! I've already put my name down for a few in 2016, and Tim and I have made a vow to attempt the Ladybower 50 towards the end of the year. Hopefully we can get Max and Ross on board and make it a Project Trail reunion.



Dark skies: rain looms at the Worm's Head in the Gower

NAME: Max Holloway
AGE: 27
JOB: PhD student
FROM: Cambridge



So, how did the race go?

As usual, I got overexcited at the sight of a start line and raced off far too fast. Four miles in, I realised that there was no way I could sustain the pace for another 10 miles! The sensible part of me won out and I backed off a little. Soon after, Tim and Mark both appeared from the Welsh undergrowth for a brief showing of Project Trail unity. Tim disappeared up the next hill but I stuck on Mark's heels and we shared the rest of the race, taking turns to lead into the crazy headwind and motivating each other on to the finish.

We hear the weather was challenging. Did it blow a gale?

I am not sure 'gale' does it justice! The headwind made the flats feel like uphill and the sidewinds left me with one cramping leg from running sideways. Then there was the rain – leaving much of the ground waterlogged and one hillside temporarily converted into a river crossing!

How did the training help you during the race?

Without the training, there is absolutely no way I could have got through the race in that time or in one piece. The training has been a huge confidence-booster and provided a brilliant base for my running in the future.

What's the greatest thing you've learned during Project Trail?

There have been so many learning points, and a wealth of expertise to



ROBBIE SAYS:

"Max has huge potential as a runner, and he has the ability to suffer too. However, rest was something he struggled with. Runners need rest even more than other endurance athletes: without it, your body cannot adapt to the stress of training. When Max grasps this, he will become an even better runner by training less."

Follow Max on Twitter @maxhollo

"THE TRAINING'S BEEN A HUGE CONFIDENCE-BOOSTER"



draw on – from the coaches to the guys at *Men's Running*. But the biggest thing I have learned is how much I enjoy running! I started the Project as a relative newbie, worried about injury and feeling a bit lost. Now I run six days a week without worry and have discovered beautiful parts of my local countryside that I didn't know existed.

Has it made you want to take part in more trail events? If so, which ones?

I have a long list of places I want to explore, from the Lake District to Patagonia. My wife and I have entered a 53-mile ultra on the West Highland Way next April so we have some training to do! There is also talk of a possible Project Trail reunion at an ultra in the Lakes next September. Watch this space!



Wet wet wet: soaked through post-race

NAME: Ross McMillan
AGE: 41
JOB: Estate agent
FROM: Glasgow



So, how did the race go?

It was undoubtedly the toughest and most challenging race I have ever done but, all things considered, I was delighted to scrape into the top 40 and under my realistic target time of 2hrs 15mins.

We hear the weather was challenging. Did it blow a gale?

The course would have been tough enough in good conditions but gale-force winds and incessant rain certainly did add a little extra spice to the experience. All in all, though, it made the tales in the pub afterwards sound even more heroic!

How did the training help you during the race?

The knowledge that I had put in the hard miles to get this point definitely helped in mentally hanging in there when the going got tough, while the technical tips that Robbie had given certainly helped when it came to the hills.

What's the greatest thing you've learned during Project Trail?

The positive impact the different terrain has had on managing my ageing joints and numerous niggling injuries has been

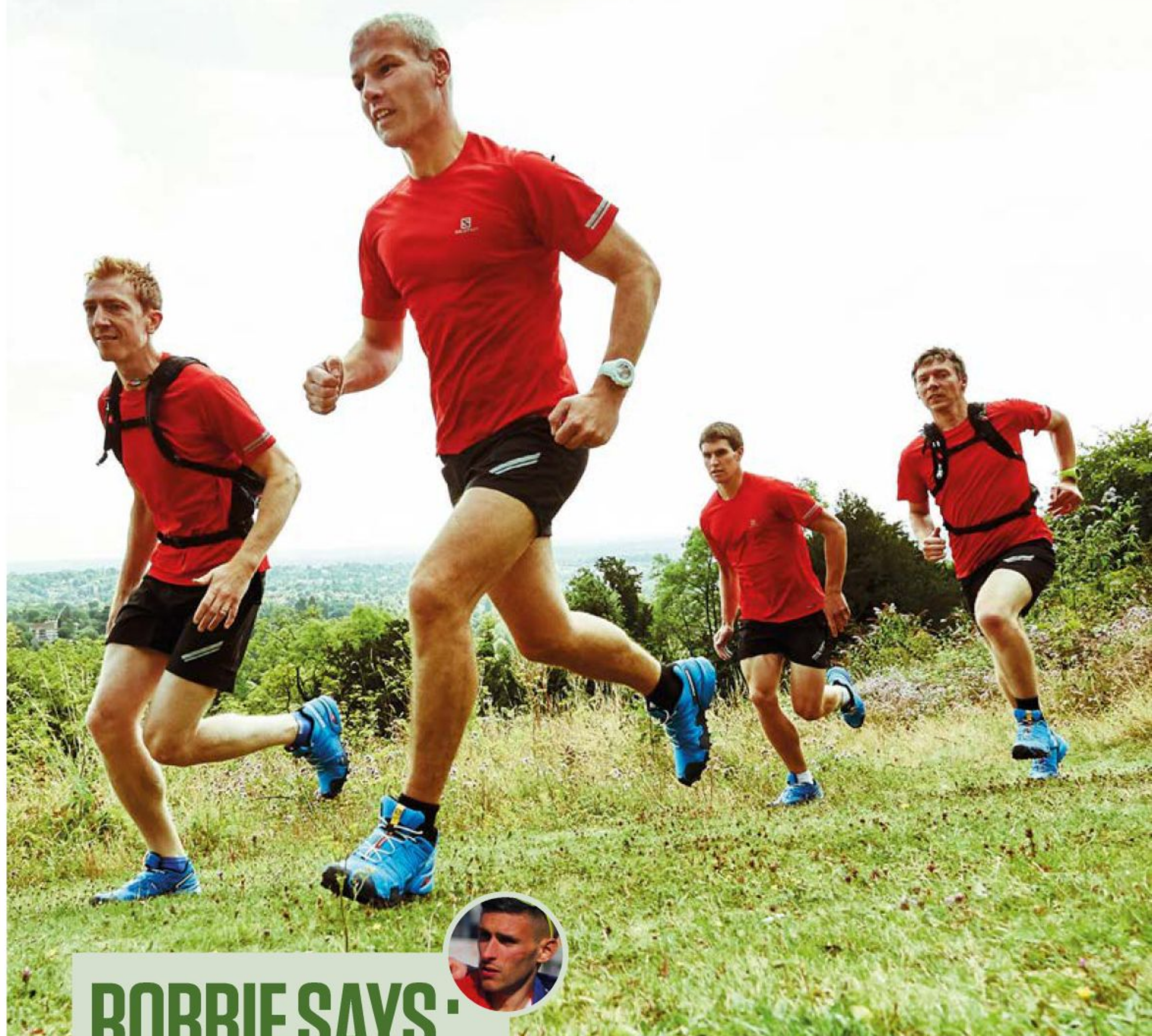
"IT WAS THE TOUGHEST RACE I'VE EVER DONE"

the real eye-opener for me. That, along with just simply enjoying the experience of running, will definitely stay with me.

Has it made you want to take part in more trail events? If so, which ones?

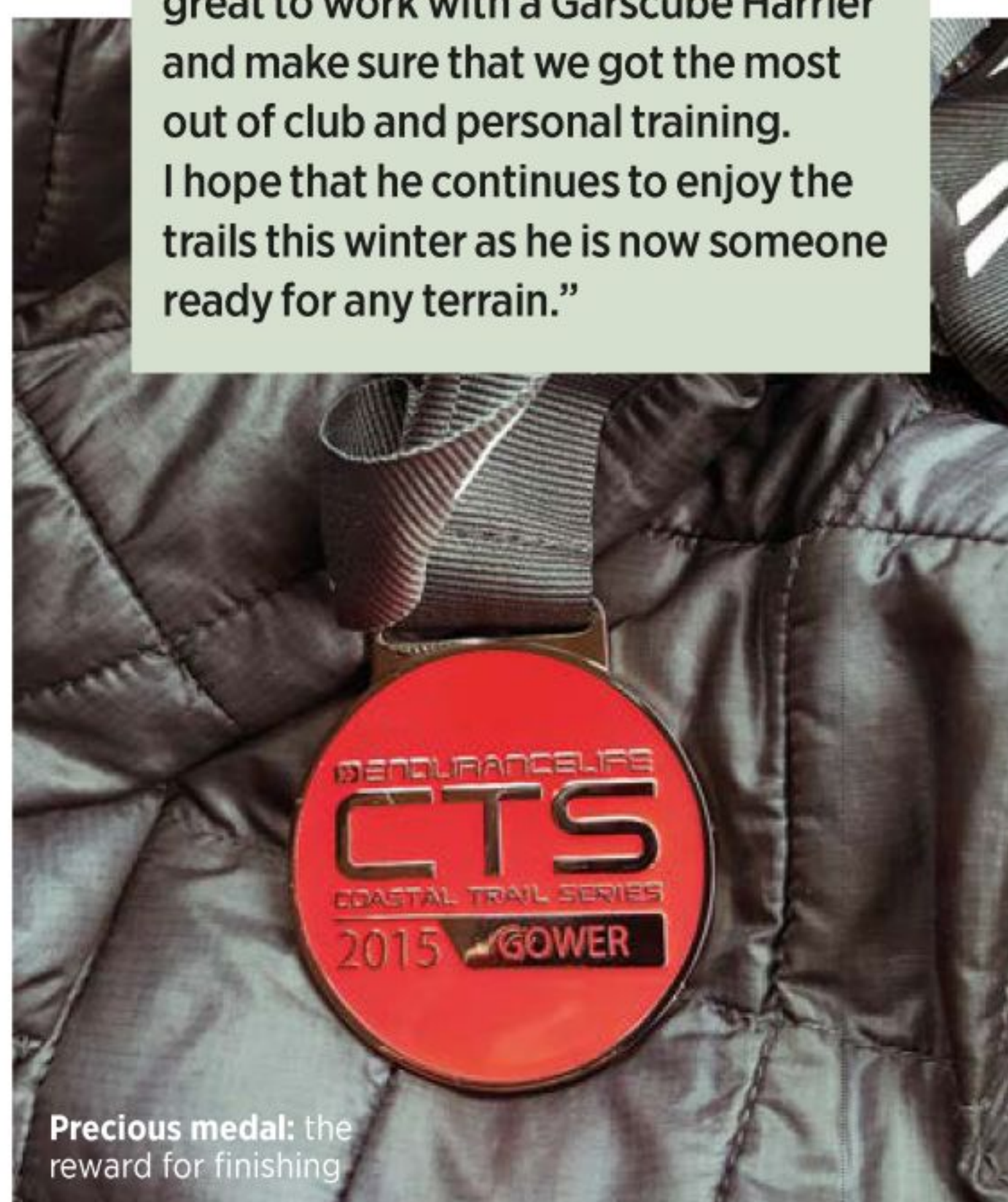
I have definitely found a love for off-road running and, with this in mind, plan to make my next big race a trail marathon at another Endurancelife event in Northumberland in February. Assuming I survive that, the plan then is for a road marathon in May to measure any improvements the trails have given me. Then, who knows? Maybe ultras aren't out of the question, after all... 📧

Follow Ross on Twitter @rd_mcmillan



ROBBIE SAYS:

"Ross took to the trails spectacularly and embraced the Scottish mud in his training for the Gower Half. It was great to work with a Garscube Harrier and make sure that we got the most out of club and personal training. I hope that he continues to enjoy the trails this winter as he is now someone ready for any terrain."



Precious medal: the reward for finishing

THE RESULTS

Out of 284 starters, all the guys finished in the top 40!

- 15th **Tim Major** 1:56:59
- 23rd **Max Holloway** 2:03:29
- 24th **Mark Rochester** 2:03:34
- 40th **Ross McMillan** 2:11:17



OFFICIAL PARTNERS



5 BIG TRAIL GOALS

It's the perfect time to get an exciting off-road challenge in the running diary. Trail guru **Ceri Rees** takes a look at five worthy contenders

EXPERT ADVICE

Ceri Rees is an ex-international athlete and trail running expert. He is the founder of Wild Running, offering trail running and mountaineering experiences for all abilities.



If you are looking for something to get your teeth into in 2016, have a look back at the previous 12 months and think about what inspired you. Was it the spectacular views from the trails? The camaraderie of a big race? Or trying something a bit different like adventure racing? Whatever it is, now's the time to start planning this year's next epic challenge. Here are five categories of off-road running worth considering.

■ THE SWIMRUN

Why? If the gear-focused world of triathlon turns you off, the more back-to-basics world of Swimrun could be for you. These long-distance aquathlons, set in some of the UK's most picturesque landscapes, offer participants the chance

to swim in lakes and run up mountains.

How much training? A lot. Swimruns tend to be pretty challenging so you'll need to be well prepared. When you go for a run along a river or by the sea, run in a wetsuit and jump in. Or swim with a dry-bag buoy. Swim out and back or parallel to the shore but mark your route when you go in. Get out, and repeat.

ONE TO TRY

SWIMRUN UK LYN I LYN SNOWDONIA

Date: 6 August

Website: entrycentral.com/swimrunsnowdonia

Based on Sweden's famous ÖtillÖ, this event challenges competitors to swim in Snowdonia's tarns before scaling Wales' highest mountain.

■ THE MULTI-DAYER

Why? Multi-day events are still few and far between in the UK, but completing one will give you a huge sense of satisfaction. Revive the dormant 'journey gene' that lives inside all of us former hunter-gatherers and sign up for a multi-day adventure.

How much training? Preparation will include time spent on feet (try to get at least six hours in, walking or running) as well as getting your nutrition right. This one is all about mental strength and diet. So experiment with different fuels and choose non-saturated fats over sugary carbs. Practise running in the cold and packing a lightweight backpack with all that you need. Long runs on consecutive days will also help.

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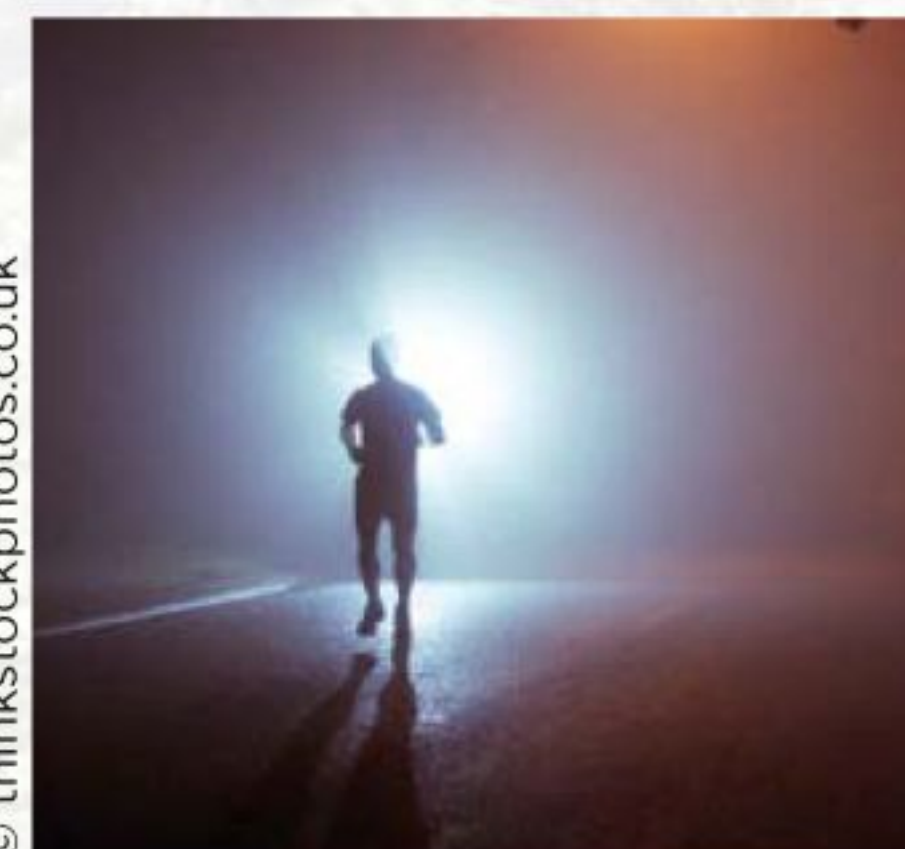
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Left to right from main: competitors during the 2015 Engadin Swimrun; hardy souls take on the OMM; arresting views over Exmoor; Ennerdale Water, the start of the Ennerdale Horseshoe; a man's best friend is his headtorch during the Dusk 'Til Dawn ultra

ONE TO TRY

ORIGINAL MOUNTAIN MARATHON

Date: 29-30 October 2016

Website: theomm.com

A seriously tough two-day adventure, requiring navigational skills and no shortage of grit and determination. Regularly underestimated, it's a tough challenge not to be approached lightly. But if you're looking for a true test, this is a must-do multi-dayer.

THE TRAIL MARATHON

Why? A trail marathon beats a road marathon hands down, in terms of your own recovery time and having an awareness about what you are running through. Although you may not have applause ringing in your ears, if you experience some connection with your surroundings (other than the enforced pit stop!) you'll be hooked.

How much training? Going off-road means becoming a generalist. Include some multi-sport combos like swimming, cycling or core work at least once a week. Balance and strength are key, as well as sufficient recovery.

ONE TO TRY

ENDURANCELIFE EXMOOR

Date: 19 March 2016

Website: endurancelife.com

If you can get past the steep entry price, try one of Endurancelife's Coastal Series

marathons. If for no other reason than they will give you an excuse to look out to sea without having to worry about navigation. This course is rated as 'extreme', however, so be prepared for a seriously tough day out.

THE FELL RACE

Why? It's a chance to visit almost any of the National Parks around the UK and to be self-sufficient with a map. Entry fees are low and you can often enter on the day. Plus, who can say no to a pasty and orange juice at the end? The real grass roots of the sport.

How much training? You may have to cultivate a dislike of tarmac and a love of navigation. But always keep an eye on the forecast and learn to interpret it. There are no junk miles on the fells. So just get out there in all weathers whenever you can. When you lose motivation, jump on a bike or go swimming. Most fell runners have a formidable base fitness.

ONE TO TRY

ENNERDALE HORSESHOE

Date: 11 June, 2016

Website: cfa.co.uk

The Ennerdale Round, as it is known, is perhaps the jewel in the crown of the Lakeland Classics. Starting at a scout camp next to Ennerdale Water, the most westerly lake in the national park, the

route will take you up some monstrous climbs like Red Pike, Green Gable and Pillar and is at least 21 miles. Be warned though, this is an FRA 'A' race, which means an element of navigational competence is required.

THE ALL-NIGHTER

Why? Running all night, guided only by the light of your headtorch, is a truly unique experience. You'll battle sleep deprivation but it'll all be worth it to see the sun rise over the mountains.


How much training? The difference between this and a daytime ultra is you'll be running when your body wants to shut down and sleep. So get used to running in the dark and try to run all night at least once in preparation.

ONE TO TRY

DUSK 'TIL DAWN

Date: 31 October

Website: beyondmarathon.com

The concept is simple: runners have to try to complete the 50-miler, which starts and ends in Buxton in the Peak District, before sunrise. Starting at sunset, entrants have exactly 14 hours and 13 minutes to navigate a challenging circuit along the Limestone Way and taking in the Cat and Fiddle, Shining Tor and Cat's Tor. Anyone who is caught by the 'Grim Sweeper' at the back will be forced to retire! 



MADE IN BRITTON



Team GB 24hr runner Robbie Britton guides you through all things ultra



Ultrarunner Ryan Sandes scales South Africa's Table Mountain

5 REASONS TO RUN AN ULTRAMARATHON

Running an ultra may sound like a particularly masochistic pastime, but there are plenty of reasons you should give my favourite sport a go. Here are five of the best...

1. ANYONE CAN DO IT

Contrary to popular belief, ultras are not the preserve of superhuman athletes. If you had to move 100 miles right now, to save your life, you could do it. It might not be pretty, but you could do it. If you want to run an ultra, you just have to sign up and start training. And that doesn't have to mean loads of miles – three quality runs a week can do the job.

2. YOU CAN PIG OUT

One of my favourite things about racing ultras is the checkpoints. It's just like running past a corner shop every five to 10 miles and being able to help yourself. Sandwiches: check. Mars Bars: check. Haribo: check. I've even been past one with chocolate-covered strawberries and

ice cream. I eat healthy for most of the year but race day is a clear exception.

3. TEST YOUR LIMITS

There is joy in finding out what is physically and mentally possible for the human body and mind. Rewind six years and I was a post-grad student whose "endurance ability" was linked to heavy boozing rather than running. If you had said I would be able to run in circles for 24hrs, I would have dismissed it out of hand. Now I'm looking for bigger and tougher events to push myself to the limit. What are you capable of?

4. YOU GET TO SEE THE WORLD

Without ultrarunning, I would never have heard of La Palma, Cappadocia or Tarawera – let alone have run in these places and seen some of the most fantastic sights on earth. Even just getting out onto the trails in your local area will show you new places. Who knows where your first 2016 ultra might lead you?

5. THE SUPPORT IS INCREDIBLE

Ultrarunners are a generous bunch. That's why you'll see people give up their weekends just to help sweaty strangers at a checkpoint, pace someone for 50 miles or provide step-by-step advice online. No doubt about it, ultrarunning has a real sense of community. Become part of it in 2016.

If you haven't been convinced yet, drop me a tweet (@ultrabritton) or an email at robert.britton@live.com and I'll make it my mission to find you 100 more reasons to introduce you to a sport that will change your life for the better.

RACE THIS

Roseland August Trail, 13 August 2016

Mud Crew's Roseland August Trail (or "the RAT" to its friends) is a great entry option. Boasting distances of 11, 22, 32 and 62 miles, it allows the whole family to get involved. Organised by good, enthusiastic people who run to a high level themselves, you'll be well looked after here.

mudcrew.co.uk



© charleswhittonphotography.com

TRAIL GEAR

HIT THE TRAILS RUNNING WITH OUR SNEAK PEAK OF THE BEST NEW OFF-ROAD KIT



Nathan Halo Fire Runners Headlamp

Night running doesn't have to be a hair-raising experience. Several brands have now got running-specific headtorches that offer jiggle-free brightness and, for the price, few offer the same quality as Nathan's Halo Fire. With multi-beam and over 280 lumens, plus a nifty touch-free sensor offering different modes with the wave of a hand, your post-work excuses can be no more.

RRP: £110

nathansports.com



GoPro Hero Session 4

Not only is the latest GoPro the smallest action camera ever made, it's also virtually indestructible, water resistant even without a case, and capable of delivering the unparalleled crystal-clear video quality that we've come to expect from the giants of extreme sport videography.

RRP: £249.99

gopro.com



Brooks Cascadia 11

Not the nimblest of shoes, but what it lacks in subtlety it makes up for in traction and protection. A so-called 'pivot system' on the outsole adjusts to the contours of the trail – reducing the risk of twisted ankles – and the midsole provides ample rock-ready cushioning.

RRP: £110

brooksrunning.com



Nutrii quark

Quark: the sound of a well-to-do duck, but also a fat-free, low-calorie, high-protein (12.8g per 100g) dairy product that also happens to taste like it shouldn't be good for you, i.e. nice. Nutrii's quark comes in plain, raspberry, and mango and passionfruit flavours, and all are made with fresh Dorset milk. What's not to like?

RRP: £1.39 plain, £1.69 flavoured

eatnutrii.co.uk



Fitletic Ultimate II waist belt

Waist belts need to be two things: bounce resistant and practical. Fitletic's recent addition to it's Ultimate range is both. A water-resistant front pocket is big enough to store most smartphones and an interior pocket was designed with keys, cards and other small essentials in mind. Perhaps the most useful features, though, are the five 'gel loops' for easy, on-the-run access.

RRP: £23.99

fitletic.com



Kahtoola NANOs spikes

Sometimes, even the grippiest of trail shoes just aren't quite grippy enough. Kahtoola's NANOs spikes are a scaled down version of their hugely popular MICROspikes, with thin, tire-like studs for traction over packed snow and ice. Compatible with all trail shoes and even most casual trainers, the spikes weigh in at just 226g and offer peace of mind on icy excursions.

RRP: £32.50

kahtoola.com

RUNNING TECH

A DEDICATED SPACE FOR ALL THINGS TECH

✓ TESTED ✓ RATED



★ 8 ★
10

RUNTASTIC MOMENT ELITE RRP: £149

Are you after style or substance in your running tech? Not every company does both things well and you're often left with a choice – buy something that looks good or something that works well.

But, of course, this isn't always the case. Companies like Runtastic are trying to find a balance. Its Moment Elite watch is something that looks good and performs well.

It's a solid, nicely designed watch that doubles up as a fitness tracker, measuring your training and everyday activity. It does the basics well, but one feature that many will love is its long battery life – six-months, thanks to a lithium battery.

Syncing with the companion app is virtually seamless, and it's there that you get the detail that's lacking on the Elite's analogue display. Daily active minutes, distance covered and steps are all there.

If you want a running watch that gives you the right data and looks like a real timepiece, the Elite is a great option.

runtastic.com



★ 6 ★
10

SUUNTO AMBIT3 RRP: £210

After unboxing it, setting it up and wearing it for some time, don't be surprised if you get the sense that the Ambit3 is like a Walkman living in a world full of iPhones. In other words, there's nothing bad about it – it gets the job done – but it's just not as evolved as its rivals.

Having said that, it has good multisport functionality and the interval training, complete with its own voice guidance, is a handy training tool.

suunto.com



★ 7 ★
10

RECON JET RRP: £359.99

With its Jet glasses, Recon is trying to take wearable tech to the next level. They feature a heads-up display in front of the right lens, which gives you all the training information you'd get from your typical sports watch – pace, distance and more.

The glasses are bulky, but not difficult to wear while running. It takes time to get used to seeing the screen, but being able to control everything via an optical touchpad makes it easy to navigate.

reconinstruments.com



★ 6 ★
10

YOURTRAINER RRP: FREE TO DOWNLOAD (SUBSCRIPTION FEES VARY)

YourTrainer wants to encourage you to workout anywhere, anytime, using any device. But how interactive can a fitness trainer be when they're spurring you on via a video? Well, more than you might think.

There are feedback options that tailor the workout to your needs during playback, but they're quite basic. To its credit, YourTrainer is constantly trying to learn more about you to make your workouts more personal.

yourtrainer.com

STARTER KIT



NEW BALANCE BEACON JACKET

RRP: £130

For those who have to run before sunrise or after sunset, staying visible is absolutely crucial. As its name suggests, the Beacon Jacket is nothing if not eye-catching. The glow-in-the-dark fabric, which you can charge up under direct light, is also wind- and water-resistant, making it the ideal winter running companion. Like most of New Balance's kit, the Beacon Jacket has a stylish look and an athletic fit. It doesn't come cheap, granted, but it is a top-quality product.

newbalance.co.uk



ODLO RAPTOR RUNNING SHIRT

RRP: £45

Not the cheapest but, when it comes to running tops, you undoubtedly get what you pay for. Odlo utilises supremely fast-drying material that wicks sweat away in an instant, keeping you cool and running light. The fit is also perfect: not too big as to be noticeable, but equally not so small that you feel restricted or in need of a trip to the gym beforehand. For the fashionistas among you, it looks pretty good too.

odlo.com



THE NORTH FACE SPLIT SHORTS

RRP: £35

These shorts, from The North Face's 'Better Than Naked' range (probably best to take them on their word), are lightweight, ultra breathable and – unlike many racing shorts – come equipped with a useful zipped pocket, plus a larger mesh compartment for easy access to mid-run pick-me-ups. A quick-drying inner liner also prevents excess sweat and reflective details shine bright in low light. A solid option for a springtime marathon.

thenorthface.co.uk



FEETURES ELITE MAX CUSHION

RRP: £14.99

Socks might not be at the top of your kit wishlist, but while a good pair should go unnoticed, a bad sock can be run-wrecking. Feetures' trademark Sock-Lock support system provides targeted compression to eliminate the blister risk, while offering extra cushioning to the areas of the foot that need it most. Technicalities aside, however, the Elite Max Cushion is as comfy as socks come and, really, what more do you want?

feeturesrunning.com

**TOMTOM RUNNER 2****RRP: £189.99**

TomTom manages to combine simplicity with top-of-the-range technology. Underneath the face of the watch is a four-way cursor on the strap, where most of the input is done. Click on the right to activate the 'Run' feature; click down for 'Options', 'Profile' and other settings, such as pairing with an iPhone. The wrist-based heart-rate monitor allows you to train in different intensity zones and the pacing is as accurate as any watch we've tested.

tomtom.com/en_gb

**BLACK DIAMOND BBEE 11****RRP: £40**

When you take your running off road, or plan on going further than a half-marathon, a backpack can become an invaluable companion. Black Diamond's bbee 11 is just 360g (the weight of a typical trail shoe), but boasts an impressive 11-litre capacity – more than enough space for water, food, clothes, etc. The contoured straps sit comfortably on your shoulders and the backpanel is breathable enough so as to avoid an excessive build-up of sweat.

blackdiamondequipment.com

**ULTIMATE PERFORMANCE KIELDER HANDHELD BOTTLE HOLDER****RRP: £9.99**

In an ever-evolving running world of technological 'must-haves', sometimes you need to step back and assess what you really need. Ultimate Performance's bottle holder doesn't claim to be anything spectacular, but its beauty is in its practicality. Despite its simplicity, no details have been spared: from the padded, moisture-wicking handstrap, to the zipped pocket and hi-vis reflective trim. This is a product ideal for the middle-ground between 10K and marathon.

ultimate-performance.co.uk

**APTONIA 33 RECOVERY KIT****RRP: £13.99**

An effective warm-up and warm-down routine increases blood flow and releases muscle tightness. For such injury-preventing processes, the foam roller is hard to beat. Do it right and you've got your very own sports masseuse in the comfort of your own home. This recovery kit from Decathlon is more than that, though: for half the price of most foam rollers, you get a massage ball for smaller areas, such as your calf, and a stick for larger muscles, such as your quads.

decathlon.co.uk

UPPER

The synthetic portion of the shoe that covers and fits to the foot, holding it onto the midsole.

HEEL COUNTER

Plastic or fibreboard piece in the heel that helps to keep the heel centre over the midsole. Watch out for heel tabs being too high as these can rub against the achilles.

MIDSOLE

Cushions the foot and plays a key role in controlling excess foot motion. The midsole is located between the upper and the outsole and is attached to both.

**NEW BALANCE VAZEE COAST**

RRP: £65

In a marketplace flooded with technical footwear, the Vazee Coast has a refreshingly simple purpose: it's for running in and wearing down the pub with your mates. Obviously, for the benefit of our readers, we ensured rigorous testing in both scenarios. Not only can we report that it's a comfortable, lightweight shoe, perfectly suited to carrying you over 26.2 miles; it's also a good value option for everyday use and perfect if you like to live in your running shoes. Equally suited to raising the bar as it is to propping it up.

newbalance.co.uk

**SAUCONY TRIUMPH ISO 2**

RRP: £144

The unparalleled comfort of Saucony's neutral shoes has been its prime selling-point in recent years. The Iso 2, though, represents a shift to a more competitive, responsive option – without compromising cushioning or durability. The star of the show is EVERUN, a new form of cushioning that's slimmed down and more responsive. Saucony loyalists will be pleased that the ISOFIT upper has retained its unrestrictive fit and, ultimately, the brand has done an impressive job of making a neutral shoe feel quick enough to be a competitive racer.

saucony.co.uk

**UNDER ARMOUR SPEEDFORM FORTIS**

RRP: £100

Although a thick sole makes them look fairly bulky, these shoes are extremely light (238g) and should be well suited for racing. Being as light as a duckling's feather, however, means they're lacking in the strength department. The trade-off for blending performance technology with looking fashionable here is a lack of stability: the mesh fabric around the ankle is barely a millimetre thick. On the plus side, they have good cushioning and a snug fit. Best suited for minimalist runners; the average runner might struggle with them in longer races.

underarmour.co.uk

ASICS METARUN**RRP: £200**

The limited edition MetaRun was released in late November to Box Office fanfare. With a new and improved FlyteFoam midsole, a small carbon stability system (AdaptTruss) and MetaClutch external heel counter, it's been billed as a long-distance runner's dream. And there's no denying that it provides a smooth ride; the upper fits like a glove and the FlyteFoam provides just enough cushioning without hampering speed. However, those looking for an out-and-out racer may find the AdaptTruss stability system a bit clunky for their tastes, while the hefty price tag will be a deal-breaker for many. That said, debut marathoners and those who prefer a protective ride won't find a shoe better suited to tackling the distance in such comfort and style.

asics.co.uk**TOE BOX**

The forward tip of the upper of a shoe that provides space and protection for the toes.

OUTSOLE

The outer sole of a shoe. The outsole should provide traction and resistance to wear.

**HOKA CLIFTON 2****RRP: £99.99**

If you've already run in the Clifton, you'll be pleased to see its latest addition, with a firmer toe box and heel cushioning plus a no-sew Speedframe upper design. This neutral shoe is packed full of cushioning to absorb the shock of hard tarmac surfaces, but is equally at home off road. We found them supportive and comfortable – you still get 29mm of EVA cushioning under the heel – but also unbelievably light to run in. The over-sized midsole might look cumbersome, but believe us when we tell you that it's something of a joy to run in.

hokaoneone.com**BROOKS LAUNCH 3****RRP: £90**

The Brooks Launch 3 is a sub-300g shoe that punches above its weight in terms of stability (despite being a neutral shoe) and relative cushioning. This leaves it sitting somewhere in between a high-mileage training shoe and an out-and-out racing flat. Most of the weight-saving has come from the upper, which is thin and breathable but reinforced in the right places for durability. As well as having a roomy toe box, this is the type of shoe you could race a marathon in without sacrificing too much comfort.

brooksrunning.com/en_gb**INOV-8 ROADCLAW 275****RRP: £110**

An adaptation of inov-8's much-loved Mudclaw, this shoe strikes a nice balance between speed and protection. Like the Mudclaw, it benefits from a roomy toebox and offers great grip, even on slippery surfaces. Weighing in at 275g, it's fairly light too, making it a decent option for racing as well as training. The laces are nice and chunky – unlike on some of inov-8's trail options – but the significant 8mm heel-to-toe drop may be a deal-breaker for the forefoot-strikers among you.

inov-8.com**MARATHON SHOES**

With marathon season approaching, this month we've taken a look at seven decent shoe options for your next 26.2-mile effort. Of course, we're all looking for different things from a marathon shoe, so we've reviewed a range of options – from the heavily cushioned HOKA Clifton 2 to the speedy New Balance Vazee Coast. So, whatever your preference, hopefully you'll find something that can spur you on to marathon success. Happy running!



NEW MARATHON FOR 2016



**Looking for that marathon PB for 2016?
Then the new Gloucester City Marathon
is the race for you...**

With its flat, fast course and closed roads, the new Gloucester City Marathon promises to be a top event for scenery, community support and value for money.

The course starts and finishes in Gloucester Park in the heart of the city. It winds around the pedestrianised streets with views of the historic cathedral before heading past the Kingsholme stadium, the home of Gloucester RFC.

You will find plenty of support en route from Young Gloucestershire (YG) and Heart Angels students, and after running through the quaint villages towards Tewkesbury you will return to Gloucester via the quayside and in to the park to live music and family entertainment.

HELP YOUNG PEOPLE

Organisers TriMax Events will work with Young Gloucestershire and the charity hopes runners will help them to raise £10,000 to help disadvantaged young people back into education and employment.

Through the event, TriMax will provide work-experience opportunities for young people participating in YG's work-based development programmes while the Charity's Southgate Street drop-in centre, for young people not in employment, education or training, is to be used

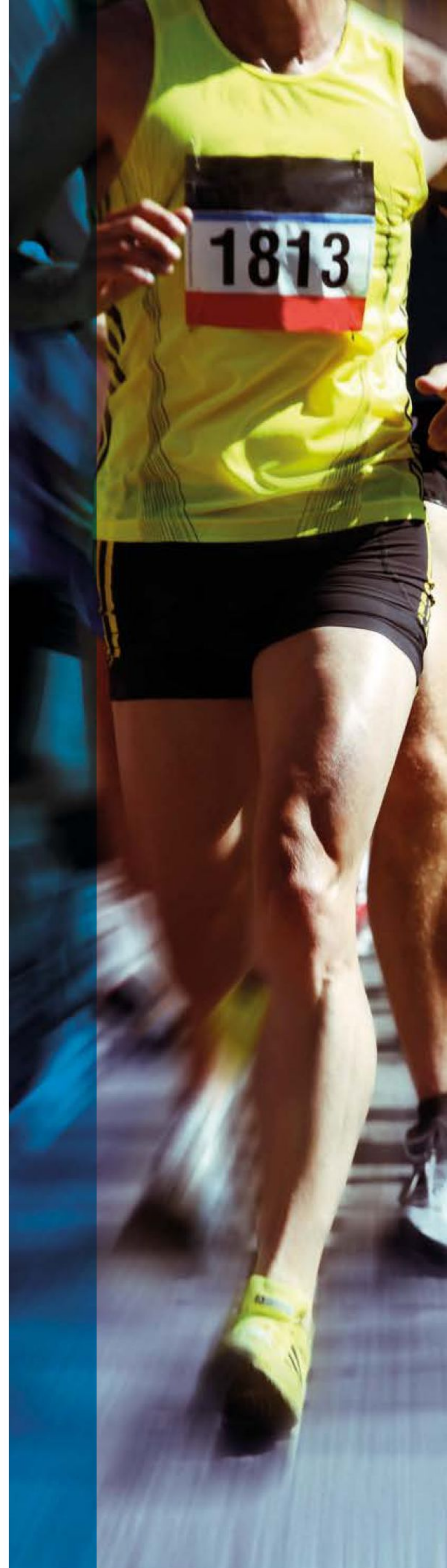
as a race HQ on the weekend.

Young Gloucestershire's chief executive, Tracy Clark, said: "It's fantastic that we are working together with the inaugural Gloucester Marathon, which passes right by our drop-in centre which supported nearly 2,300 young people last year. As a smaller charity whose services are needed more and more by young people, this is a great opportunity for the charity to provide both work-based experience to young people and also to give runners the opportunity to fundraise and help give Gloucestershire's disadvantaged young people the skills, confidence and motivation to improve their own lives."

TriMax Events is run by GB age-group triathletes Andy Maxted and Andrea Jones, whose passion for running and triathlon is evident at their races. Their wealth of knowledge and experience ensures you can expect a friendly race and plenty of support from their triathlon team, Passion Fit, who will be on hand to support you.

They both still compete in triathlons and marathons across the world, and can be contacted via email for any help or advice (trimaxevents@hotmail.co.uk).

Entries are open and selling fast, so if you would like to be part of the first Grand Marathon Event for the City of Gloucester, get your trainers on and enter online at: gloucestercitymarathon.com





→ SIGN UP AND YOU CAN EXPECT...

■ A race t-shirt



■ A bespoke medal



■ A goody bag



■ A fantastic race and hopefully some sunshine!

Entry prices are only £40 until 31 January 2016. There is also a prize fund of £2,000 to be shared by the first male and female and £500 to be shared between the fastest male and female with a GL postcode.

→ FURTHER INFORMATION

■ To sign up now, visit gloucestercitymarathon.com

■ For more details and news updates via Facebook [facebook.com/gloucestercitymarathon](https://www.facebook.com/gloucestercitymarathon) and Twitter [@gloscitymara](https://twitter.com/gloscitymara)

■ For further information and to find out you can help Young Gloucestershire, visit younggloucestershire.org.uk






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FEBRUARY

RACE BOOK

INSIDE

108 ENDURANCELIFE DORSET 10K **110** THREE MOLEHILLS
112 RED BULL 400

THROWING CAUTION TO THE WIND




With gale-force winds and unrelenting hills to contend with, the Endurancelife Dorset 10K was certainly not for the faint-hearted. **Rick Pearson** took his place on the start line for a race to remember

Brain off, brakes off.” These are the words I tell myself as I crest the final hill of the Endurancelife Dorset 10K. Problem is, the descent to the finish below looks more suited to abseiling than running. Do I ease off and risk being overtaken? Or do I hurtle down and risk losing my two front teeth?

Rewind 45 minutes and I’m standing at the start line alongside 300 other trail running enthusiasts. This race is notoriously tough, graded as ‘extreme’ on the race organiser’s website, but it’s not the hills that are worrying me, it’s the wind. You can literally lean against it. The race number on the front of my vest is not long for this world, and there’s some concern in the pre-race briefing about runners being blown off cliffs. But what

is trail running without a hint of danger?

After a quick countdown, we get underway. At the front are two men being helped up the hill by their powerful dogs. Those of us without four-legged friends, however, are soon reduced to hands-on-thighs hiking.

It’s a move I’ll be returning to with depressing frequency during the first 5K, which is as punishing as it is picturesque. At the top of one particularly steep climb is a cruelly placed cameraman taking snapshots of the agony. I attempt a smile but can only manage a grimace.

UPS AND DOWNS

As Isaac Newton once noted, “What goes up, most come down.” And while my uphill running is pitifully slow, I am gaining places on the descents. Some solid cross-country

Left to right: running along the Jurassic Coast; one of the many hills; battling the gale-force winds



“I’VE TAKEN THE EASY OPTION BEFORE, SETTLED FOR SECOND BEST AND MADE THE LONG DRIVE HOME WITH A HEAD FULL OF ‘WHAT IFS’”



races this year have instilled in me the importance of committing fully to the downhills, and my quick descents keep me within touching distance of the lead group.


Having checked the course profile the previous night, I know that the second half of the race is a lot easier than the first. More significantly, the wind is now behind me. Having previously felt like a 100-year-old asthmatic, suddenly I become a fleet-footed Kenyan. So what if I’m essentially being buffeted to the finish? On a course like this, you take all the help you can get.

With about 2K to go, I begin to overtake some runners taking part in the day’s various other distances – which range from a half-marathon to an ultra – and silently congratulate myself on picking the shortest option. However, there’s still one last hill to conquer and, as I begin the

ascent, two runners appear out of nowhere and quickly overtake me.

In moments like this, it’s so tempting to surrender: to tell yourself you’ve done your best and to slow down. I’ve taken the easy option before, settled for second best and made the long drive home with a head full of ‘what ifs’. You know what? It’s a bad trade-off. This time, I choose to dig deep and battle it out.

Which brings us back to where we started: with me looking down that final hill worrying about losing my two front teeth.

Dentists, be damned, I hurtle downwards. In the space of 100 yards, I overtake three runners, moving from seventh to fourth place in the process. It’s the greatest finish of my running career, and it’s come not from a change in physicality but a shift in mentality. Brain off, brakes off, indeed. 

ENDURANCELIFE DORSET

Number of runners: 235
Winner: Paul Brennan,
49mins 32secs



Weather:



Terrain:



Verdict: ★★★★★★★★

endurancelife.com

We sent a three-man team to the brilliantly organised Three Molehills race in Surrey. As Alex Marks, Isaac Williams and Rick Pearson duly found out, however, race names can be deceiving

MOUNTAINS NOT MOLEHILLS

It seems deeply appropriate, as we pull in to Denbies Wine Estate in Dorking, that Rick, Alex and myself (Isaac) – comprising the *Men's Running* relay team – are nursing a collection of sore heads.

We're here for Events to Live's annual Three Molehills race, a three-stage relay over the hills in Surrey's Mole Valley: Box Hill, Norbury Park and Ranmore Common. The first leg, although short, is by far the hardest, taking in the 270 impossibly steep and cruelly uneven steps of Box Hill, before a speedy descent back to Denbies. The second leg is far less technical but still not for the faint-hearted: a long but gradual uphill stretch to Norbury Park, followed by a winding downhill and flat return. Finally, the third leg is a speedy out-and-back route to Ranmore Common.

Alex, blissfully unaware that the four miles ahead of him are centred on some excruciatingly steep steps, is up first.

ALEX MARKS

LEG 1 – BOX HILL, 4 MILES

I had the pleasure (or pain, depending on how you look at it) of running the first leg. The leg itself is definitely the most difficult out of the three, mainly due to the enormous steps you have to climb in the middle section. The first mile is run on road, offering a nice fast start before you reach the monstrous staircase.

It didn't look too bad at first. However, the stairs just seemed to spiral on and on. Wonderful views of the Dorking countryside greeted me at the top, although they were slightly hard to appreciate with burning legs and a red face. The latter part of the leg provided a wonderful and welcome downhill, guiding the first-leggers back to the grounds of the Denbies estate. It was a



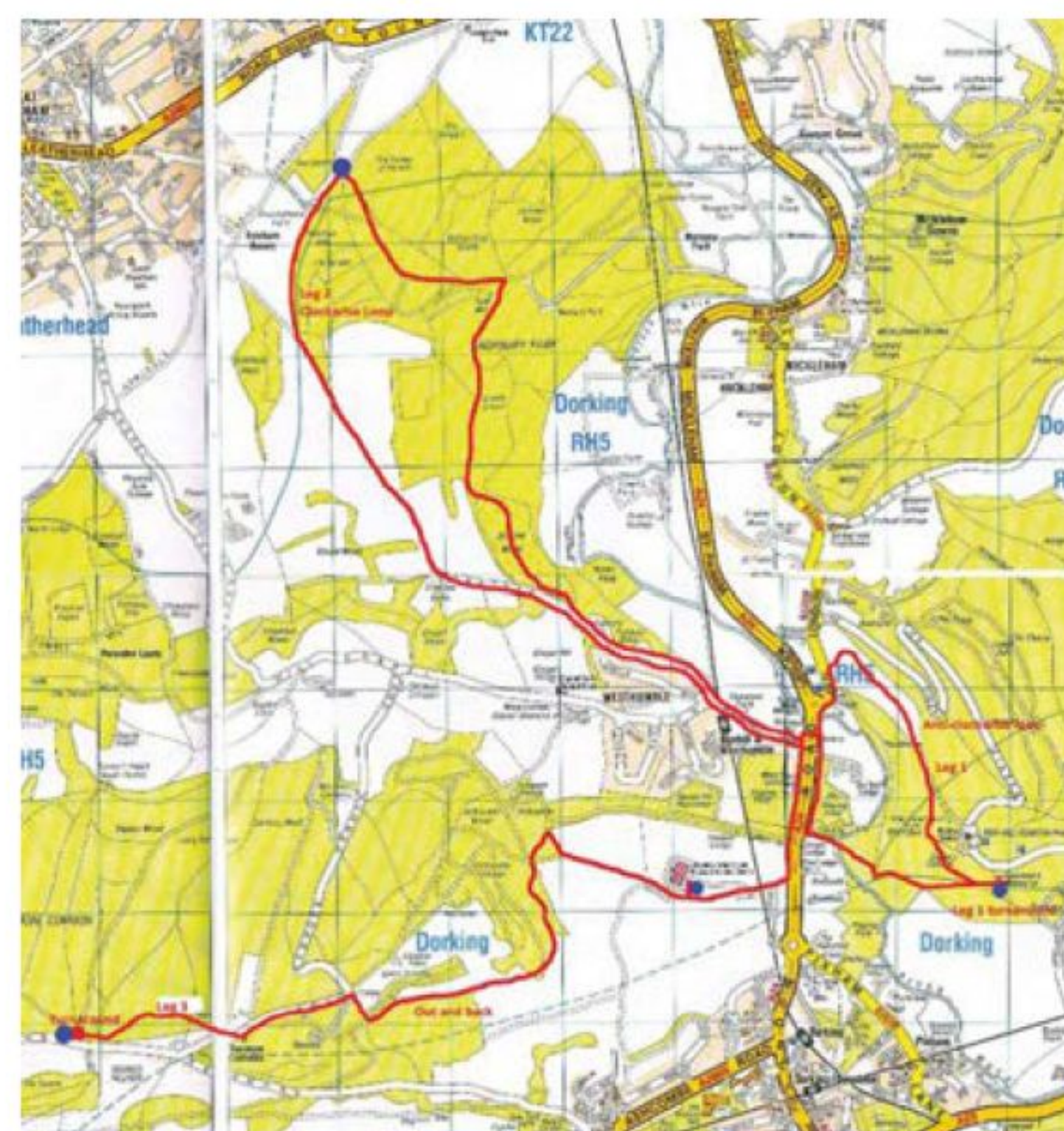
brute of a run, but a very rewarding challenge (in hindsight).

ISAAC WILLIAMS

LEG 2 – NORBURY PARK, 6 MILES

Very aware of my tendency to hare off unsustainably – and the fact that a long climb awaited – I took the first mile and a half fairly cautiously. As I turned left off the A24, a friendly marshall directed me up a wooded country lane and the hill began. To my surprise, my granny-stepped shuffle led me to the top having not been overtaken and not feeling overly broken. As the path opened out onto farmer's fields, I passed a checkpoint and asked how many miles I'd done. "Three more to go," came the reply. Great news! Halfway and feeling OK, I thought, "What's the catch?"

The catch, it turned out, is that my legs suddenly seemed aggrieved at the uphill effort just forced out of them. As punishment, they tripled in weight and mile three to four was a struggle. Fortunately, a downhill section allowed



to make up some lost time and a flat return, along the A24 – and a sprint finish of the loosest definition – brought me back to the line to set Rick on his way.

RICK PEARSON

LEG 3 – RANMORE COMMON, 4 MILES

Running tip: if you're ever looking for an ego-boost, run the last leg of a relay against people who are running the whole thing alone. By comparison, you will seem like Mo Farah, bounding up the hill while they begin the long death-march to the finish. It's testament to the spirit of the race that, instead of showering me with insults, these people encouraged me up the hill. With my sights firmly set on the relay runner ahead, I worked hard up the incline, overtaking him as we crested the hill. Reaching the turnaround point, it was a long sprint downhill to the finish.

Once there, we were greeted with the welcome news we'd finished in second place – and presented with an even more welcome bottle of Denbies wine. I could get used to this relay lark. 



Left to right: Rick, Isaac and Alex look weather-beaten at the finish; the course map; Joe Morwood, winner of the individual event, leads the pack

3 MUST-RUN RELAYS

South Downs Way 100 Miles Relay 4 June 2016

A classic relay from Beachy Head, East Sussex, to Holden Farm in Hampshire. Each runner in the six-man teams must run three non-consecutive legs.
southdownsrelay.co.uk

Conti Thunder Run

23 & 24 July 2016

A 24-hour off-road relay around a 10K loop in Catton Park, Derbyshire. In teams of three to five or six to eight, runners can expect a festival atmosphere and a touch of sleep deprivation.
contilightningrun.co.uk

The Green Belt Relay

21 & 22 May 2016

Eleven-man teams take on this 22-stage, 220-mile race, which runs through the idyllic surroundings of London's Green Belt, starting in Hampton Court and ending in Kingston-upon-Thames.
greenbeltrelay.org.uk



Where are those wings when you need them? Tackling the Red Bull 400 in Park City, USA

RED BULL 400

The toughest 400m race anywhere in the world, this uphill slog will push you to the very limit

■ WHAT IS IT?

The short, sharp shock of hill running. The Red Bull 400 sees competitors attempt to run up ski jumps across Europe and North America. The leading men tend to take four minutes to make it to the top, but it can take well over 10 minutes to make the gruelling ascent.

■ WHY SHOULD I DO IT?

Because it's completely unique. Plus, it'll put your hill-climbing skills to the test like no other event. And just think about the bragging rights. "You see that ski jump up there? Well, I ran up it."

■ HOW TOUGH IS IT?

In a word: very. All but the leading few are reduced to a hands-on-knees hike within seconds of making contact with the hill. The gradient is totally unrelenting and you'll be utterly

exhausted by the finish. Success here depends as much on mental fortitude as it does on physical fitness.

■ WHERE IS IT?

At a variety of ski slopes across Europe and North America, from Harrachov in the Czech Republic to Whistler in Canada.

■ WHEN IS IT?

The events typically start in May and run until September.

"ALL BUT THE LEADING FEW ARE REDUCED TO A HANDS-ON-KNEES HIKE WITHIN SECONDS"



HOW DO I ENTER?

The dates for 2016 are yet to be confirmed, but the entry process is very straightforward. Simply google 'Red Bull 400' and follow the link. Entry typically costs €100 (roughly £70), although with no Red Bull 400 races in the UK, the real expense is the travel to get there. Worth it, though. redbull.com

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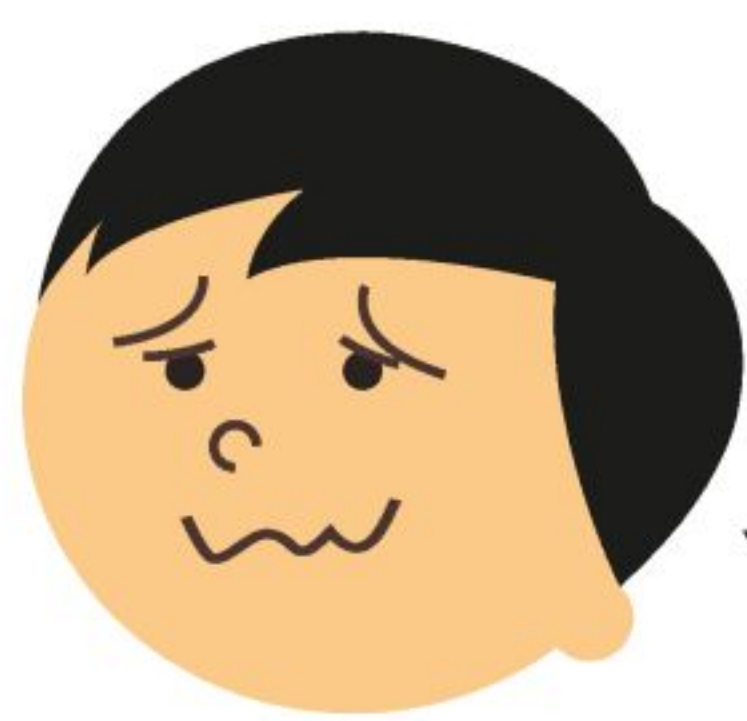
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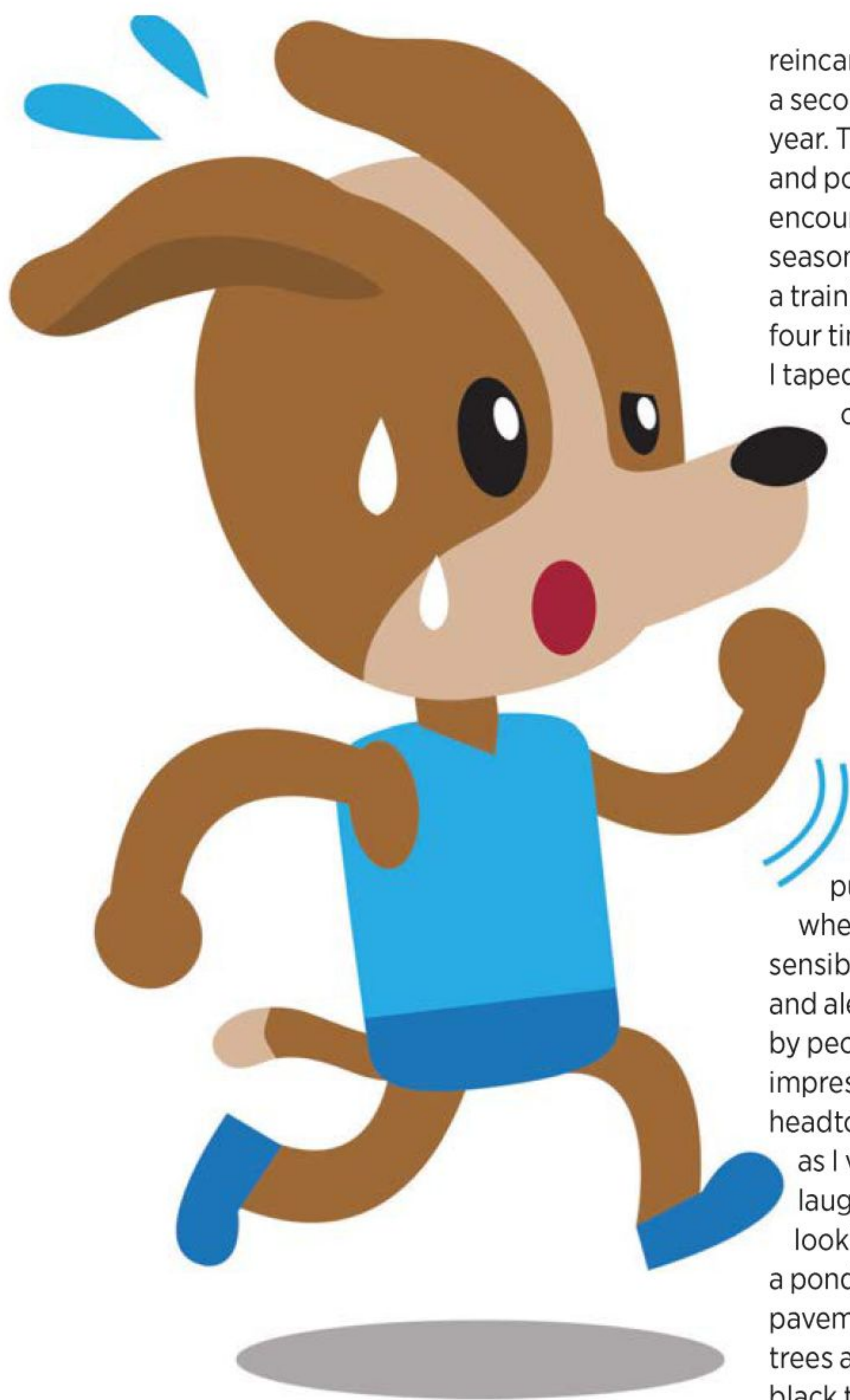
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↓ I MAN DOWN!



MR columnist Jim Old fights ridicule and man boobs to build a runner's body



reincarnation will render it worthy of a second glance, whatever the time of year. That's not to say it can't be prodded and poked, teased and bullied and encouraged to go faster. So in the seasonal spirit of resolve, I printed off a training plan. It wanted me out there four times a week for three months.

I taped it to the front of the fridge – a sort of Lutheran statement of intent, without the nails.

Becoming a midwinter runner requires you to renew your vows every year. You must tell it you love it and that you will commit to making things work. It asks you to embrace the ample darkness at both ends of the day. I found this difficult at first.

I timed runs in defiance of logic and common sense and pushed myself through the door when it would have been more sensible to be sleeping, or eating a beef and ale pie. I was persecuted at home by people who did rubbish Dalek impressions every time I reached for my headtorch. The same people mocked me as I ventured out into lashing rain and laughed sadistically when I returned looking like I'd been dragged out of a pond. I tripped over black dogs on dark pavements, was confounded by fallen trees and got completely lost in the pitch black two miles from home. I skidded on ice and slipped on tree roots and careered into fences. I misjudged puddles, swerved unlit cyclists, ran intervals in howling gales and even went looking for hills. When I caught myself giggling while wading through thigh-high floodwater, I realised I was loving every damp, dark, thermally-challenged minute of it.

And then winter caught a cold and died. Suddenly going for a run no longer required a suiting-up process similar to preparing for a spacewalk. I'd love to

“I WAS RUNNING LIKE A DOG: FOR THE SIMPLE, CRAZY, FLAPPY-EARED JOY OF IT”

pretend that as the clothing layers fell away, I emerged like a beautiful athletic butterfly. But, predictably, my summer body looked much like my winter one. If I'd bothered with 'before' and 'after' photographs, they could have made for a tricky spot-the-difference competition on the puzzles page of *Man Boobs Monthly*. What had changed was that my new body could go further and get there faster than my old one.

SUNSHINE SUPERMAN

A sparkling day in early spring found me by the river in shorts and t-shirt with the sun on my face and bugs in my teeth. I was running off plan; going out as fast and as hard as I could. I'd put money in the bank with each one of those winter sessions and I wanted to check my balance and see what my legs could do. I sucked in sackfuls of crisp, clear air; my muscles were steel suspension springs and I left all previous models of myself behind in the dust. I was running like a child or a dog: for the simple, crazy, flappy-eared joy of it.

I caught up with a couple of guys running together, chatting as they went. The trail broadened as I reached them and I shot past the chap on the left. “Bloody hell!” I heard him exclaim. There was just the tiniest dusting of awe in his voice. A cheap compliment, I know, but I took it anyway. I grinned to myself and ran a little faster... 

Summer bodies are made in winter. This phrase arrived in my head just after Christmas last year. It was part of an ad campaign for gym membership, targeting post-festive guilt. It's a pious and prissy little sentence, made all the more irritating by being completely and totally true. It's one of those things you know but somehow still have to be told.

I've inhabited this old carcass of mine long enough to know that only

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